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Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating the new President of the General Assembly and in commending the President of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session for his excellent leadership. Allow me also to convey my deep respect for the tireless efforts that His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made as leader of the Secretariat and as a world statesman.

Today our world continues to face numerous arduous challenges that require an urgent and collective response. Many of the gravest threats to the States members of the Assembly, including mine, the Federated States of Micronesia, are simply beyond the abilities of our individual countries to single-handedly address, even with our most aggressive and concentrated efforts. To speak before this body today is an honour and an opportunity that I must take to encourage international cooperation to help address those challenges.

The biggest challenge we face today in Micronesia continues to be climate change, not just the projections of future loss and damage, but the dangerous impacts that my people are experiencing every day. Sadly, to date no significant progress has been made on climate-change mitigation. Time and again, I have asked, "How do I tell my people that their plight and their future lie in the hands of those most responsible for greenhouse gases?"

From our point of view, we must step up our collective efforts to confront global climate change more urgently and more creatively. What is needed now is to close the ambition gap. I therefore call on the major emitters to step up their level of commitment under the Kyoto Protocol. Our very existence depends on it. Without international cooperation and assistance, we are helpless against the adverse impacts of climate change.

Micronesia has barely contributed to the problem of climate change; it has, in fact, contributed to some of the solutions thereto. We actively participate in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations and continue to advocate for significant cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions.

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We were therefore pleased with the agreement reached this summer in Rio to begin cooperation on a global phase-down in the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Micronesia first proposed amending the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in 2009. Today it remains the ideal venue for a phase-down of the production and consumption of HFCs, just as has been done with respect to similar gases that HFCs were invented to replace.

To the rest of the world, the map may look fairly empty on our side of the globe, but to all of us it is as much a homeland as any continental land mass. We must treat it accordingly, and we must defend it just as strongly. And therein lies our second, closely related challenge: the change in our ocean environment. That change includes not only rising tides and temperatures and ocean acidification, but also the damage caused by harmful and destructive fishing practices, pollutants such as mercury and oil, and other waste resulting from unsustainable human activity. The abhorrent practice of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing continues unabated, and urgent actions to reduce by-catch, fish discards and post-harvest losses must be taken.

For us, as a Pacific small island developing State, our livelihood, our economy, our culture and our way of living are tied to a blue economy. We have recognized that the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources are key elements in achieving sustainable development. We must fulfil our commitments made at Rio.

My country welcomes the decision taken in Rio to hold a global conference on small island developing States in 2014. Micronesia fully supports that decision and reiterates its call to hold such a conference in one of the Pacific small island developing States.

The rising cost of global energy continues to pose a serious challenge to our socioeconomic development and sustainability. Small island developing States such as Micronesia continue to rely heavily on imported fossil fuel despite the abundance of renewable energy sources. Our unique and particular vulnerabilities often translate into significantly higher costs for energy infrastructure and fossil fuels. As a consequence, our Governments spend a high percentage of our limited budgets on fossil-fuel procurement alone, often at the expense of the other sectors of our economies.

To mitigate that situation, small island developing States adopted the Barbados Declaration on Achieving Sustainable Energy for All in Small Island Developing States, which has become an annex to the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, adopted last June. That is a concrete expression of the small islands' own determination and ambition to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy access and low-carbon development.

However, our transition to renewable energy requires financing and new, appropriate and affordable technology. To that end, I must recognize and commend the bilateral assistance already provided in that area by the European Union, Japan, China, the United States, France, Italy and Turkey, as well as others that are also assisting through other multilateral arrangements. We urge other partners to join us to ensure sustainability. We also urge support for the Secretary-General's initiative on "Sustainable Energy for All".

Our health-care system is increasingly under stress and facing constant challenges from the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, which has reached epidemic proportions in the Pacific. While we accept that the primary responsibility for health rests with our Government, we are seeking assistance from the international community in capacity-building, institutional strengthening and policy formulation. While we recognize the contributing effects of nutrition and lifestyle in that epidemic, we are also mindful of the fact that climate change has magnified the challenge as a result of the threat it poses to food security and the traditional lifestyle of Micronesians.

The Federated States of Micronesia supports the greater participation of women in social, political and economic development. We look to development partners to enhance our investment in ensuring that the potential of women is nurtured and realized through quality education, health-care services and security measures against domestic and gender-based violence. It is only appropriate that measures to empower women to be true participants in nation-building should be locally driven. We have embarked on mainstreaming women's views, interests and contributions into national development policies. We recognize and appreciate the assistance extended by the United Nations system and our development partners to support our national policies to enhance gender equality.

Turning to our Organization, the single most urgent need is to reform the Security Council. Naturally, such an important step must not be taken in haste. However, after more than a decade of talking, we should be close to finding an acceptable formulation. Success on this issue will strengthen the Organization and stimulate and renew confidence in the Charter.

My country subscribes to the principles of peace, security and prosperity, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We are horrified by the senseless killing of thousands of innocent civilians in Syria. Over the past two weeks, we have witnessed surges in violence. We join the international community in condemning violence, in particular the attacks on diplomatic missions, diplomats and personnel in Libya and Egypt. We must be bold in our actions to prevent such attacks. I call on Member States to continue their efforts to find peaceful solutions to these conflicts, especially the most challenging ones.

The United Nations has the unique opportunity to address and solve the many challenges facing its weakest and most vulnerable States Members. The challenge lies in how the Organization and its most able Members can turn their many ambitious statements into mob. .zing the required resources to successfully protect the citizens of the world.

We in the Federated States of Micronesia, facing our troubled world, continue to place our faith in the United Nations as we look towards future. Our isolation amid the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean no longer shields us from the threat of international terrorism. Globalization has long had a foothold on our island State. Facebook links us to the world.

Allow me to end with a quote from my Constitution: "The seas bring together, they do not separate us .... We extend to all nations what we seek from each: peace, friendship, cooperation and love in our common humanity".

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waheed: At the outset, I express my delegation's warmest congratulations to the President on assuming office to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to record our deepest appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his untiring efforts in steering the deliberations of the sixty-sixth session to a successful conclusion.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his extraordinary report (A/67/1) presented to the Assembly on Tuesday. Despite the many unprecedented challenges facing the United Nations today, we remain confident that the Secretary-General's leadership and the resolve of the Organization and of humankind will not waver.

I represent a small yet proud island nation that has long advocated for an effective international framework for the security of small States, that has vigorously campaigned for international actions to combat climate change and that has contributed to breaking the international silence on the human rights implications of climate change.

I come from a nation that has successfully moved from an authoritarian system to a multiparty democratic system of governance — a historic transition achieved purely by peaceful means. That is why Maldivians show their solidarity with people everywhere in the world who struggle to replace despotism with democracy. That is why we support the ongoing democratization process in the Middle East and North Africa, and that is why we applaud Tunisia and Egypt for holding their first post-transition elections in a free and fair manner.

While the democratization processes in other countries in the region are on an upward trajectory, we see violence and human rights violations in Syria. We urge the Syrian security forces and anti-Government armed groups to immediately cease all hostilities and violence. We welcome the latest findings of the United Nations commission of inquiry on the human rights situation in Syria.

We strongly believe that tolerance and mutual respect should prevail among different religions and cultures to ensure that the world we live in remains peaceful and harmonious for the future of our children. The Maldives strongly condemns the recent anti-Islamic video demeaning our Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him. Freedom of expression should not be used as an excuse to insult religions, incite hatred or provoke communal violence. While the video has provoked demonstrations around the world, the Maldives does not believe that violence is the way to respond to such low-level blasphemous acts.

The Maldives has also condemned the attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi, which took the life of the United States Ambassador to Libya. On behalf of the Maldivian people, I express my deepest condolences to the United States Government and the families of the bereaved.

My delegation and I express the wishes of the Maldivian people to see the day that the Palestinian people join the United Nations as a full Member. The Maldives strongly calls on all Member States to support the true aspirations of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination in a Palestinian State.

In June we, the leaders of the world, agreed to signal our solid political commitment towards establishing sustainable development goals. We believe that those goals would further strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of nations. The 2015 development agenda should recognize the particular characteristics and needs of small States. It should support the creation of a stronger international architecture to achieve a sustainable future for all.

Climate change remains the most important and complex developmental challenge that small States face. We face the threat of rising sea levels. We experience ocean acidification, changes in average temperature and variable precipitation. Coastal erosion is a serious problem in the Maldives, affecting more than 113 islands. An additional 120 islands need emergency water during the dry season. The Government now spends more than 27 per cent of our national budget on building our resilience to combat the effects of climate change.

The Maldives reiterates its call for a binding agreement to reduce global carbon emissions. The world cannot afford to wait any longer for such an agreement; nor can we. The absence of a global accord is no excuse for doing nothing. The Maldives is one of the smallest island economies in the world. Our contribution to global emissions is 0.003 per cent, yet we are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For that reason, we are also taking difficult and bold measures to combat climate change. We were among the first countries in the world to eradicate chlorofluorocarbons well ahead of time. We intend to become the first to eradicate hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) by 2020. And we intend to become the first to ban the import of HCFC-based equipment. A number of our islands are also scaling up renewable energy, not only to avoid spending 20 per cent of our gross domestic product on importing fossil fuel, but also to reduce harmful emissions.

Hence, we are converting to solar or hybrid sources. A total of 20 islands in the Maldives will switch to renewable energy sources for power by next year. Those measures are part of a national initiative to transform the country's economy into a low-carbon one. If we can take those measures, why cannot the larger States, endowed with more resources, take stronger measures? That requires political commitment and difficult choices. I therefore call upon carbon-emitting countries to develop and utilize clean and renewable energy to reduce their carbon footprint.

Climate change is just one of many challenges faced by the Maldives. The country's transition to democracy, which has reached a critical point, is another pressing challenge that we are determined to overcome. Four years ago, the Maldives held its first competitive, multiparty presidential elections. That was a watershed moment in the country's long march towards democratic governance. Four years after that historic election, in October 2008, people in the Maldives ask if their lives are any better. The answer, regrettably, is, not yet. Multiparty democracy in the Maldives has so far been deeply divisive. It is also polarizing, tearing apart families and the fabric of a small, homogenous society. Political leaders elected to office by popular vote chose to act with impunity.

Centuries-old values of respect and tolerance have been replaced by intolerance and hatred in the islands where almost everyone literally knows everybody else. That is not because there is any inherent deficiency in the democratic form of governance; rather, it is because the road to liberal democracy is always rocky and long and must be navigated by a political leadership with an unshakeable commitment to the principles and values of democracy.

The past eight months have been particularly challenging for the consolidation of democracy in my country. The elected President of the country resigned in February, and later claimed that he was forced to do so. The Government opened a commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations. Some of our friends rushed to conclusions, and that did not make it any easier for us. Some big States and some not so big States took sides in a domestic political crisis and contributed to making a bad situation worse. While the Government was striving to strengthen the country's institutional capacity to manage the new democracy, some international actors continued to publicly criticize the country's young institutions.

We look for new ideas and are receptive to good ones, irrespective of where they come from. That is why we engage in international cooperation. We expect the result of international cooperation to help, not hinder, a country's march towards a better, more democratic society. It is supposed to build a country's institutions and to gain public confidence. International cooperation should not be used to undermine national capacities. It should not be used as an excuse for larger countries to interfere in the domestic politics of small States.

Small States are vulnerable in many ways. We alone are not able to stop larger and stronger countries from dictating terms. Our vulnerability is particularly acute when there is discord and system breakdowns in our countries. This is the time when the larger States should help the smaller States in the international system.

The history of a nation is never a single event or a single person. The life of our nation is composed of the lives of all of us who live there. We are the building blocks in the evolution of our countries. The knowledge, education, experience and commitment we bring to our nation are what shapes our history. They make our history unique. Respect for us and our small nation requires that our external partners not underestimate our capacity to contribute to the shaping of our own destiny. Nations must be allowed to resolve their problems on their own. The international community should not take punitive actions against any sovereign State unless there is verifiable and blatant abuse of human rights.

Yet I believe that international cooperation can and should promote positive change in emerging democracies. I believe that international organizations such as the United Nations can play a pivotal role in strengthening democratic institutions in such nations.

I believe that some of the advanced democracies can also help small States with technical expertise in consolidating democracy.

To do that, it is important to recognize the unique challenges and characteristics of small States. It is important to protect the social fabric of the tightly knit societies in our countries. It is important to review current approaches and modalities for extending international cooperation in the promotion of democracy. It is important that international cooperation not be seen to be promoting a particular ideology. It should not be seen to be taking sides in domestic politics. International cooperation should be seen to promote and encourage a home-grown democracy that is consistent with universally accepted values and principles.

Regular, free and fair elections are a fundamental component in any democracy. Yet holding elections is not, by itself, a sufficient condition for consolidating democracy. It requires patience. It requires making hard choices and compromises. And it requires cultivating and nurturing democratic values. My Government is implementing a comprehensive plan to nurture such values in the Maldives. We are committed to creating an environment that guarantees individual freedom, where human rights are fully protected, where democratic values flourish and where human innovation thrives. We are committed to creating a democratic and free society that is able to shape its own destiny.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Maldives for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Franco Gómez (*spoke in Spanish*): At the opening of my statement in today's general debate, allow me to express to Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly, the satisfaction felt by the Republic of Paraguay at seeing him preside over the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. He can be assured of my delegation's constant support during his time in office. Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his important and effective work as President of the General Assembly at its previous session. I also extend my congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commendable work during the past six years at the head of the Organization, during which he demonstrated his firm commitment to global peace and international security.

In relation to the theme of the general debate, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", the Government of Paraguay once again asserts and confirms the importance of settling disputes by peaceful means while respecting the principles of international law. Relations between States would be fairer, more supportive and more equitable were they governed by full compliance with international law, the principles of which guide and direct the peaceful settlement of disputes. In my country's view, favouring political expediency over treaty commitments is unacceptable, because political considerations can never take precedence over formal international agreements.

On this first and last time that I will address the General Assembly, I believe it is necessary and unavoidable to elucidate to the international community the political process that my country is currently undergoing. The history of Paraguay changed on the night of 22 June. The National Congress, exercising its constitutional powers — and I would like to publicly express my appreciation for the presence here today of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Paraguay, senators and members of Parliament, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, and persons of various political stripes — decided by near-unanimity to remove the then-President from office by means of an impeachment process established under the Constitution.

The Paraguayan Congress sought in that manner to put an end to a very serious political crisis that threatened the country, in which 17 fellow countrymen had already lost their lives, and to avoid further bloodshed and grief on Paraguayan soil. As mandated by the Constitution and owing to my duty as Vice-President, I assumed office as President of the Republic. Since then, in accordance with my oath of office, I have been governing Paraguay peacefully and democratically, fully respecting public freedoms. The Government of Paraguay, along with the overwhelming majority of Paraguayans, takes pride in the fact that there are no political prisoners in the country, that nobody has been exiled, that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fully guaranteed, and that each and every right enshrined in human rights agreements signed within the framework of the United Nations, as well as in the Organization of American States, is ensured.

Paraguay has normal diplomatic relations with the great majority of the States Members of the United Nations. We guarantee to all of them that Paraguay will continue to work tirelessly in favour of peace and security, the basic pillars of our Organization.

Nonetheless, Paraguay finds itself in a difficult international situation, one created by its neighbours, the members of the Southern Common Market and the Union of South American Nations. Both entities have adopted sanctions against the Republic of Paraguay without allowing it to exercise its right to defend itself, a right that is clearly set forth in the international agreements that are invoked for the application of sanctions. In violation of international treaties, those countries have attempted to become the custodians of Paraguayan democracy, putting aside the principle of non-intervention enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Throughout its history, Paraguay has repeatedly suffered from arrogant interventions in its internal affairs.

The holocaust brought on by the War of the Triple Alliance, stemming from an unjustifiable coalition, has still not faded from the memory of my people. It decimated my country's population and destroyed its economy.

In the short period that my Government has served, our critics have been unable to find a single violation of the agreements that I have mentioned. The great Justo Pastor Benítez, a famous Paraguayan politician, rightly maintained that it is dangerous to be right where there is no justice.

Before humankind's highest Assembly, I clearly state that Paraguay will never accept interference in its internal affairs by foreign Powers. We will continue to build our democracy in accordance with the will of the Paraguayan people, and fully implement it through our freely elected institutions. We are certain that we know how to get through this crucial period with dignity and integrity. We will not be subjugated. We call on members to reflect and work together to find the path towards rebuilding South American integration, which is currently compromised. Peace is built through dialogue, to which we are open.

Those who today wish to become leading actors in the international community will have to acknowledge that that is not possible without regional unity. Leadership is built through respect for international law. That is the only way that we will have a common position on Security Council reform, which is a long-standing wish of the universal institution that embraces us.

In such difficult times for the international community, we will find solutions to our current political and economic difficulties only by putting international institutions on the path for which they were established, namely, to serve the women and men that build humankind's future day by day. Paraguay, a founding member of the Organization, remains committed to that.

The various events in different parts of our planet this past year demonstrate the relevance and true validity of a forum such as the United Nations in the international arena. That is why there is an urgent need for the courageous, innovative and profound reform of its organs, structure and functions. Changes are needed to adapt the Organization so that it can respond with greater effectiveness and agility to an international agenda that is very different from that which existed when the United Nations was conceived. Moreover, it faces a shifting dynamic in the international picture that was impossible to envision at its inception.

That is why Paraguay calls on the international community to strive towards the wonderful international utopia of a universal Organization governed by the strong and the weak, the large and the small, and the rich and the poor, all equal in a great world Assembly. Paraguay believes that it is necessary to insist that the reform process include the gradual elimination of the veto power.

This year, on the twentieth anniversary of the historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and known as the Earth Summit, we believe that it is necessary to reaffirm the belief that sustainable development and its economic, social and environmental aspects must be the linchpin of the United Nations focus. The Republic of Paraguay therefore reaffirms its belief in that goal and in the need to maintain the balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent pillars of human development.

As the world's largest producer per capita of clean renewable hydroelectric energy, which drives our economy and its industrialization, we will use that energy for the country's development for the benefit of the Paraguayans and foreigners who inhabit our land and shape its future. That energy, which we will use little by little, will be another driver of our well-being.

The issue of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) is an important aspect of Paraguay's foreign policy. The asymmetry and disadvantages of our geographical position have caused and continue to cause a huge problem that can be offset only through international recognition and special and differentiated treatment on the part of the developed economies that seeks to include Paraguay in the globalized world.

In that regard, on 12 September, during the recent fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, a group that Paraguay had the honour of chairing during the biennium 2010-2011, the need for transit States, in the first place, and the international community, as a whole, to duly recognize the comparative disadvantages of our countries in relation to the conditions needed for their development was underscored.

Paraguay wishes to reiterate here its commitment to international peace and security. In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping operations, it affirms its political willingness to continue contributing human resources to such operations. Regionally, we highlight the progress achieved by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Paraguay increased its deployment to MINUSTAH by more than 100 troops to show its firm commitment to the reconstruction of a brother country devastated by the scourges of nature.

I would also like to underscore the effort and commitment of the Paraguayan military observers in the increasingly difficult situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, where they have remained, even in the most difficult circumstances. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to those soldiers who perform their duties, in many parts of the world, with dedication, hard work and sacrifice in the service of the United Nations. Today, we must all also remember the obligation of Member States to protect and defend the security of diplomatic and consular premises in all countries.

Paraguay is increasingly concerned about the growth in transnational organized crime in its worst manifestations, namely, drug trafficking on a large and a small scale, arms trafficking and trafficking in migrants and in persons, among others. Those transnational crimes stem mainly the social and economic inequality of our peoples. Joint international efforts are needed, therefore, in order to fight such scourges head on. The Government of Paraguay reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the fight against all activities of criminal organizations and calls for a stronger position on the part of developed countries, where most of the demand associated with those crimes originates.

Paraguay also reaffirms its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For that reason, Paraguay, through its Secretariat for the Prevention of the Laundering of Money and Goods and in close cooperation with other national institutions, has made a coordinated effort to bring its legal and normative framework in line with its commitments and with the recommendations made by the international organizations charged with preventing and prosecuting crimes related to money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Laws and resolutions have been passed pursuant to the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF). In February 2012, Paraguay was removed from the FATF grey list and is now, as a result of our efforts, included on the white list, a fact that we are proud of, as a member of our region and in line with our commitment to the fight against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Promoting and building awareness of, and full respect for, human rights worldwide must continue to be one of the unchanging and incontrovertible commitments on our Organization's international agenda. Human rights violations are a scourge that must forever be eradicated from our civilization.

The Government of Paraguay reiterates that the growth of nations can be achieved only through social equality, by prioritizing basic needs such as education, health and land reform. Growth without social development will only result in a world that is more unequal and unjust.

The Paraguayan Government is actively working to build a development model that gives priority to decent work. In that regard we are promoting mechanisms within the framework of a State policy aimed at improving working conditions. They include, first, the creation of a Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security; secondly, the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention No.189 of the International Labour Organization, adopted in 2011 by the International Labour Conference in order to improve the working conditions of thousands of domestic workers in Paraguay; and thirdly, the implementation of an employment policy for young people through a bill aimed at enabling young people to enter the workforce, which has been partially approved by the National Congress.

Since its beginning, my Government has maintained its belief in and commitment to making inexorable progress towards equal opportunities and rights for all of Paraguay's inhabitants. In that regard, we have never faltered in the constant struggle for full social, economic, political and cultural rights for women. As evidence of those firm beliefs, soon after assuming its duties, my Government decided to upgrade the Secretariat for Women's Issues to an executive ministry, in accordance with United Nations recommendations. Finally, in that respect, I must mention our satisfaction with, and full commitment to, Paraguay's election for a new term as member of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2013-2017.

The Government of Paraguay, which I have proudly led since the end of June, now has a historic democratic obligation to organize the general elections scheduled for 21 April 2013 and to guarantee that they are peaceful, transparent and exemplary. When the next President takes office, on 15 August 2013, the soundness of Paraguayan democracy will be confirmed. At that time I will look into the eyes of my countrymen and those of foreigners who live in our country and shape our future alongside us and will be able to say: mission accomplished. I ask God and the Virgin to help us and to bless us so that all Paraguayans together can move towards the future that we want.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nishani: We gather here every year to share our analysis, our views and comments on the course of world events. We also take this opportunity to share our concerns and to meet, interact and try to offer our best commitment to finding appropriate solutions to current and future challenges.

A year has passed since the last session, and the world has continued to change. Development and economic growth in many countries have raised hundreds of millions of people above the poverty line. Societies throughout the world are taking a stand today, demanding more rights and asking for effective political participation. Democracy, human rights and increased participation by women in public and social life have all globally improved. Despite unprecedented global awareness, climate change remains a major source of concern. The continuing deterioration of the global economic climate is also a permanent source of anxiety everywhere. Threats to peace and security in various parts of the world show how far we still are from achieving the global security we want. It is therefore only fair that we expect the United Nations, the Organization we have placed at the centre of our international architecture, to be more responsive, efficient, effective and transparent.

This year Albania celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of its independence. As we mark that important date and survey our history for the past 10 decades, we note with satisfaction that for more than half of that time the State of Albania has enjoyed successful cooperation and active participation in the life of the United Nations. Our commitment has grown over the years and has embraced almost every aspect of United Nations activity, including peacekeeping operations. In recent years we have devoted particular attention to the ongoing efforts to reform the Organization's system. As that system has developed and its activities have become more complex, the need for greater coherence and efficiency within the Organization as a whole has grown pressing. That is particularly evident in the area of United Nations development assistance.

In June, as one of the pilot countries for the Delivering as One approach, we hosted the fifth High-level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One. The Tirana Conference adopted an outcome document with concrete and, we hope, valuable recommendations in the light of the approaching quadrennial comprehensive policy review. We know now that what started as a test idea has come a long way in a relatively short time. A growing number of countries are looking more clearly and closely at the benefits of seeing the United Nations operate and implement its assistance programmes with more coherence and efficiency. Delivering as One has convincingly shown in practice how the operational activities of the United Nations can be delivered with greater efficiency and how the system can do more and better and more with less in its efforts to help countries reach nationally and internationally agreed development goals.

I am proud to represent a country and society widely known for their broadmindedness, tolerance and acceptance of others. Albanians are probably unique to our region in that, despite having endured centuries of

difficulties in our history, we have always preserved and cherished the values of freedom and respect for the other that are fundamental to the modern concept of human rights. Albanians' respect for one another's rights and individuality is expressed first and foremost in an exemplary religious harmony. They have shown an outstanding acceptance of, and respect for, other cultures, ethnicities and civilizations, and have devoted special care and attention to those who have come seeking safe refuge from the horrors of war. Albanians have risked their own lives and far outspent their economic capacity in order to rescue and save those in need who came knocking at their door.

It is against that backdrop that Albania remains a strong believer in dialogue among civilizations and continues to engage actively in bridging the differences among the wider membership on issues pertaining to the human rights agenda. That is why Albania, which currently presides over the Council of Europe, has chosen "United in diversity" as its theme. The dialogue among different cultures and civilizations should be seen as an ongoing process requiring dedication, goodwill and care. We cannot allow the sporadic reckless actions of disruptive groups to prevent us from making a genuine effort to reach a better understanding of one another in a world that is becoming more globalized every day.

Although we were saddened and embittered by the worthless video that deliberately targets what Muslims everywhere consider sacred, Albanians, Muslims and Christians alike have expressed their indignation by simply ignoring such nonsense. We regret that the reaction to it in some parts of the world was different, used instead to fuel blind violence by angry, hopeless crowds, with fatal consequences. We must be clear: any form of terrorism or extremist act on the part of isolated, malevolent groups should never be confused with the position or identified with the attitude of an entire society or Government. No legitimate anger can excuse illegitimate violent acts that Governments, societies and political and religious leaders should firmly oppose. We condemn with indignation the terrorist act against American Consulate staff and premises in Libya and demand that the perpetrators be punished. We also condemn any act of violent protest against the Western embassies, whose mission it is to promote understanding and cooperation among countries and nations.

With a foreign policy based on peace and good relations with all nations, its modest but important contribution to international missions aimed at safeguarding peace and human rights through a policy of good neighbourliness, as well as its efforts to play a moderate and constructive role in the region, Albania has become a direct contributor to stability and security on the regional and global levels. We are determined to maintain and further build on that record.

Today, Albania participates in peacekeeping missions in several international operations within the framework of the United Nations and other regional security organizations, including in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and more. My country acknowledges and supports every effort towards global peace and security and will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations, NATO and other actors to promote peace, stability and security around the world.

Global peace and security continue to be challenged by tyranny and oppression in various parts of the world. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the ferocious repression of the freedom-loving people of Syria, whose blood is being shed through the primitive attacks on the part of a regime that has irretrievably forfeited its legitimate right to lead and represent the Syrian people. Let me join all those calling on the Security Council to step up and comply with its duty, as mandated in the United Nations Charter, to preserve peace and security. It is hard to believe that one can remain indifferent to events such as the terrible ones that have been unfolding every day in Syria for a year and a half, with tens of thousands of human losses and the widespread, deliberate destruction and suffering that have already set the country back by decades.

Have we not already learned the hard lessons of similar mistakes in the past tragedies in Rwanda and Bosnia?

Albania fully supports the peace process between Palestine and Israel. Albania reiterates its position in support of the two-State solution: a secure State of Israel and a viable State of Palestine, living side by side with each other in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the road map. The peoples of both Palestine and Israel are exhausted by that never-ending conflict, and their leaders should shoulder the responsibility of undertaking a legitimate quest for freedom and peace, with long-term vision and goodwill, and against extremists. The world longs to see the peace process in the Middle East shift from a

pattern of stagnation and become an inspiring example of difficult yet indispensable compromises.

Albania remains deeply worried by the Iranian nuclear programme, which continues to raise serious questions as to its nature instead of providing answers and guarantees, as requested over the years. We must prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear threat.

In November this year, my country will celebrate the centenary of its independence. We will commemorate a century that saw a diversity of events, which were not always among the happiest ones.

Many have described the Albanian people as survivors of harsh chapters of history. They are not wrong: the Albanian people have suffered unwanted wars, forced movement from their lands, assaults and attempts to annihilate them, unjust partitions and, during the second half of the twentieth century, bravely resisted five decades of communism. All this has come at a stiff price. Today we look to the future with hope, in a spirit of deliverance, and with strong confidence that the coming century will be marked by continuous peace, economic progress, and cultural and intellectual revitalization.

Our region, which was once a troubled hotspot and a sick area of Europe, has been profoundly and positively transformed. Six new States have been born out of the former Yugoslavia in the course of the past two decades.

We all know that it has not been easy, and we all know why. But what matters most is that everywhere in the region societies have evolved, the ghosts of the past have ceded their place to new realities, and people, in particular the young generation, are more than ever turned towards the future.

Let me point out here that the establishment of the independent State of Kosovo five years ago has become an important factor of peace and stability in the South-east European region. It has become stronger and overcome all kinds of obstacles created by those who still cannot accept reality and face the truth. As time passes, independent Kosovo is being recognized and accepted by an increasing number of States — close to half of the States Members of the United Nations.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo (see A/64/881), rendered in 2010 upon specific request from Serbia, clearly ruled that the independence of Kosovo was in conformity with the international law. Just a few days ago, the Republic of Kosovo reached another level of State consolidation with the end of the phase of independence supervised by the international community.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the authorities of Kosovo on their continued progress in building and strengthening a democratic State and a multi-ethnic society, and I call on all those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to consider a review and assessment of that irreversible reality in the South-eastern European region. The recognition of Kosovo is an act of justice for a people that has suffered for too long, and represents a net contribution to peace and stability in the Balkans.

We have already heard, and we are prepared to listen once again to the same old redundant arguments from Serbia regarding Kosovo. What war failed to do, propaganda will not achieve either. While Serbia's leaders speak of partition and the redrawing of borders, and while they make troubling statements denying genocide in Srebrenica, one is right to ask whether the past continues to loom over the present there, obscuring reality and distorting their vision of the future.

Albania has maintained strong positive economic growth despite the impact of the global financial and economic crisis. The pursuit of macroprudential policies and well-anchored structural reforms focusing on privatization, fiscal probity, trade liberalization, the business climate and the energy and financial sectors have enabled Albania's economy to become the most resilient of the economies of South-east Europe. During the period from 2007 to 2012, average economic growth has been 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), peaking in 2008 at 8 per cent of GDP.

Since 2008, Albania has had a flat tax of 10 per cent; corporate tax has decreased from 25 per cent to 10 per cent; personal income tax has dropped from 23 per cent to 10 per cent; and dozens of fees have simply been eliminated.

The Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012, published by the World Economic Forum, ranks Albania seventy-eighth out of 142 countries/economies. The World Bank report *Doing Business 2012: Doing Business in a More Transparent World* ranks Albania eighty-second out of 183 economies in terms of ease of doing business. In the areas of getting credit and of protecting investors, Albania ranks twenty-fourth

and sixteenth, respectively, putting it among the top reformer countries.

On our road towards sustained development, progress and prosperity, we remain fully engaged and committed to carrying out all reforms and taking all of the measures required to continue successfully on the path to European Union integration. This is not an alternative but a long-term choice carefully pursued over the years, and we are determined to make it happen.

In the weeks ahead, we expect a favourable decision by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on our bid for the status of candidate country to the European Union. That merit-based decision will constitute another milestone in Albania's journey to European integration and will place our commitments and our responsibilities at a higher stage of the process.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Albania remains committed to international cooperation and is determined to continue to offer its contribution to advancing peace, freedom and security, and respect for human rights, fighting poverty, promoting sustainable development and prosperity, and, last but not least, protecting the environment.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the General National Congress of Libya.

Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President El-Magariaf (*spoke in Arabic; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to commend Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his leadership as President at the sixty-sixth session. I also wish to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his valuable efforts to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Three years ago, a despot who ruled my country for 42 years with tyranny and oppression stood at this very rostrum and tore up a copy of the Charter, saying that he did not recognize the authority of the document. Today, I am standing on the very same rostrum to assure the Assembly of my delegation's support and respect for the Charter.

Today, I stand before the Assembly and the whole world to apologize for all the harm and the crimes committed by that despot against so many innocent people, as well as to apologize for the extortion and terrorism he inflicted on so many States. I want to assure the Organization that the Libyan people are determined to build a State that respects its neighbours, its international obligations and human rights, and that believes that genuine peace in the world will not be realized unless the conscience of every individual is brimming with peace. Libya will be a land of peace and security and a strong force for peace.

I am speaking today before this international gathering to convey the greetings of the Libyan people, whose revolt on 17 February 2011 turned into a comprehensive, explosive revolution that shook the very foundations of the regime of the despot Muammar Al-Qadhafi, who declared that he would burn and destroy Libya and make it swim in a sea of blood. He killed thousands of civilians, recruited mercenaries from everywhere, assaulted peoples' honour, ordered his militias and mercenaries to rape minors, and destroyed cities. However, our people did not kneel; they did not back down. Thousands of martyrs were lost among the wounded and missing. The price of freedom was paid in blood, lives, amputated limbs and lost youth.

In this forum, on behalf of the Libyan people, I salute the United Nations system, which stood with our people, with the will of freedom against blood lust and annihilation, and adopted Security Council resolutions

1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) to protect the innocent people in Libya from crimes against humanity and violations of human rights.

I stand before the Assembly today representing the Libyan people, who are building the institutions of democracy after the fall of dictatorship. The whole world has witnessed the first free, transparent elections in Libya, when the General National Congress was elected and I was honoured to be elected as its President. The world, through the United Nations, has given us complete, genuine support for that achievement.

In our revolution of freedom and in the challenge of establishing democracy, the conscience of the world was with us, both in deeds and in thoughts. Support was offered from everybody and from everywhere.

Among those offering help was Ambassador Chris Stevens, a voice of reason and conscience, a man of love and a messenger of friendship, who came to Libya after the outbreak of the revolution for freedom. He touched people's emotions in Benghazi and travelled from Tripoli to the western mountains and back and all across Libya. Chris Stevens spoke with everyone in Arabic; he always smiled and showed the utmost concern. This humane diplomat has found his place in the consciousness and emotions of the Libyan people. It was a day of sadness throughout Libya when he was assassinated, along with three of his aides. We would like to express our deepest condolences to the friendly American people for the grave loss. It was a loss for Libya as it was a loss for the United States of America.

We assure the Government and the people of the United States that this tragedy will only increase our solidarity to entrench the hopes and objectives in which Ambassador Chris Stevens believed. We will defeat the schemes of the backward terrorists, who do not represent Libya or Islam. Islam is a religion of tolerance, peace and love. As President Obama said from this rostrum two days ago, "our future will be determined by people like Chris Stevens, and not by his killers" (*A/67/PV.6, p.11*).

In that context, I would like to express my condolences to the Libyan people, particularly the people of Misrata, on the death of Imran Juma Shaban, who joined the long list of martyrs some five days ago.

I would like to express our profound appreciation for the understanding shown by the United States Administration following that incident, and to assure it that my country is determined to pursue the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We will spare no effort to strengthen the necessary protection for the diplomatic and consular missions and all guests and ensure the safety of their staff and facilities. That tragic incident does not at all represent the feelings of the Libyan people, who are known for their moderation, hospitality and gratitude. Perhaps the massive demonstrations condemning that abominable crime that took place in Benghazi and other Libyan cities best represent the genuine feelings of the Libyan people and their total rejection of all forms of violence and extremism.

Libya will never become an incubator for radical extremist groups and will remain a peaceful Muslim country where moderation prevails. The new Libya will be based on democracy, openness, transparency, combating corruption and empowering women and youth. The new Libya will be by, and for, one and all.

Meanwhile, it would be remiss of me not to condemn the campaigns against Islam and to defame the Prophet Muhammad. Such campaigns foment hatred and aim to provoke tensions among civilizations. They go beyond the concept of freedom of expression and opinion and require that the General Assembly adopt a legal document to criminalize the defamation of all religious symbols and figures. We Muslims have an absolute belief in the unity of humankind and solidarity among all human beings. We express our support for the dialogue among religions and for cooperation, tolerance and eternal humanitarianumanitarian values and ideals. My country therefore supports all efforts carried out within the framework of the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions under the United Nations and relevant international organizations.

Since the revolution of 17 of February 2011, Libya has witnessed many changes due to the uprising of its people against social injustice and political tyranny. It has not only achieved a change of the tyrant regime but has progressed towards a genuine democratic regime based on respect for and promotion of human rights, political pluralism and peaceful transfer of power, as well as on commitment to the principles and provisions of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Assembly may have followed the sequential political developments that Libya experienced during the past few months along the path to democratization. Those include the rebuilding of State institutions;

the election of the General National Congress, which will, through a constituent committee, draft Libya's permanent constitution; and the formation of the first interim Government following elections that were commended by international observers as fair, democratic and transparent.

We shall work to rebuild, reorganize and reform State institutions, primarily the police, the national army and the judiciary. Various programmes and plans are being implemented towards disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating the former revolutionaries within the ministries of defense and interior and other State institutions.

For the first time since independence, political parties have emerged on the political stage, as have freedom of the press and expression, unconditional freedom to demonstrate, freedom of assembly and freedom to establish civil institutions, trade unions and intellectual, political and social organizations without restrictions. That has led to free dialogue and the active participation of all segments of the people throughout the country.

For four decades, the former regime flagrantly violated human rights through torture, detention without trial, extrajudicial killing, forced disappearance and ill-treatment of citizens and violations of their dignity. The outbreak of the 17 February revolution in the form of peaceful protest was confronted by the security brigades of the former regime with bullets and brutal repression, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Human Rights Council decided to suspend Libya's membership in the Council and formed an international fact-finding committee that voiced the condemnation of the international community of such violations. The Council certified violations of human rights by the regime's forces and by some revolutionaries, which has required the new Libyan authorities to give the human rights file particular attention and to take many specific measures.

Some may wonder whether the Arab Spring was worthy of support. To them I say, would it have been better for the corrupt, dictatorial regimes to continue for decades more with their practices of tyranny, oppression, injustice, arbitrary treatment, corruption, exploitation, and violations of the most basic human rights? Should they have been allowed to continue pillaging the wealth of their peoples, pushing some of the oppressed towards extremism or a certain agenda incompatible with peace and security, an agenda that promoted violence and terror to achieve its objectives?

Democracy did not prevail in France a year, or even a decade, after the French Revolution. That pattern has been repeated in other States that have gained their freedom. A period of liberation was followed by stages of instability and a sometimes long and bloody civil war before those States were able to achieve stability and security and to build their democratic institutions.

At the current stage of building the new Libya, we are facing extremely serious challenges that threaten national and regional security. Some are a result of illegal activities by the sons of Al-Qadhafi and certain elements of the former regime who are being sought to face justice but have unfortunately found refuge in neighbouring countries and some other countries from where they carry out criminal activities that threaten security and stability in Libya.

But we in Libya also face other security threats — trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances, illegal immigration and smuggling and trafficking of weapons. As the Assembly knows, the nature and scope of such threats to national and border security require a bilateral and multilateral response that promotes and strengthens national efforts. Therefore, last March my country hosted the Regional Ministerial Conference on Border Security in the North African and Sahelian Region, which resulted in the adoption of the Tripoli plan of action. The plan establishes common mechanisms and structures for cooperation and exchange of information, consultations, experience and communications on border security.

Among our national priorities is Libya's right to restitution of moneys that were pillaged from the State treasury and secreted outside the country. Those funds have been used to finance criminal activities and operations in order to destabilize the country and threaten its national security. That has had an impact upon neighbouring countries as well. We therefore call on all our friends and on States to allow us to recover Libyan moneys, investments and property located in other countries, particularly in some countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, where those funds have been subject to coercive measures by some Governments.

In that context, we call upon all States of the world to cooperate in combating corruption and money laundering. We call upon financial institutions,

particularly those located in Western countries and some island States, to shoulder their responsibilities and not accept suspicious funds, particularly from Third World dictators who are bleeding the wealth of their peoples and hiding those funds under fictitious company names.

In March 2010, Global Financial Integrity issued a report estimating that the gross offshore deposits were $10 trillion. We look forward to the signing and ratification of an anti-corruption convention by 130 States. We believe that that would promote cooperation among States to combat corruption and bring about the restitution of stolen funds.

I would now like to pay tribute to the great contribution made by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, previously headed by Mr. Ian Martin, despite the many challenges and difficulties that were natural and to be expected in the transitional phase. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Tarek Mitri as the new head of the Mission. We wish him every success and look forward to further cooperation. We are committed to providing all the necessary assistance to him and the Mission.

The new Libya undertakes to respect all of its commitments contained in the international instruments and covenants on disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. We are fully prepared to cooperate transparently and sincerely with the international community to support efforts, both regional and international, to implement the provisions of international conventions and protocols and to create an international environment that would foster progress towards definitively eliminating weapons of mass destruction. We are also determined to review all other international instruments to which we are not yet party and take the appropriate decisions thereon as soon as the permanent constitution is adopted and a Government and parliament are elected.

We condemn Israel's measures designed to Judaize occupied lands and its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The international community must assume its responsibilities by taking strong, urgent measures to put an end to Israeli aggression and ensure the full protection of Palestinians. It must come up with a radical solution to the question of Palestine through a just and lasting settlement that includes Israel's withdrawal from all occupied lands and the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homes, as well as the establishment of the independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

The suffering of the brotherly Syrian people is unimaginable. The regime in power is violently repressing its citizens, shedding their blood and attacking their dignity, and has thus lost its legitimacy. In order to put an end to such a tragedy, Libya urges the Security Council to act promptly, in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect, to take immediate action to end all forms of murder, violence and destruction, find a way out of the crisis through a peaceful transition of power, and fulfil the legitimate demands of the Syrian people. This can be achieved only through consensus among members of the Security Council and support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Libya condemns the social and political injustice, harassment and killings being inflicted on the Muslim minority in Myanmar on the basis of ethnicity and religion. That is a flagrant violation of human rights and constitutes crimes against humanity. We call on all relevant human rights institutions to immediately intervene and put an end to the tragedy. We underline the necessity of forming an international committee of inquiry to identify those responsible for such violence and killings, bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure that victims are duly compensated and refugees returned safely to their homes.

States Members of the United Nations have convened every year at the General Assembly ever since the Organization was established in order to reflect on the purposes and principles set out in its Charter. We have achieved much, but many challenges remain, such as reforming the United Nations, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, reducing poverty, ignorance and disease and wars and armed conflicts, fighting terrorism and organized crime, protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development, respecting human rights, in particular the rights of women, and ensuring the rule of law and combating racism, hatred and fanaticism.

Libya wishes to stress its affinity with Africa and the importance of shifting its policies towards, and relations with, Africa and the world — which were once based on personal whims and acts of extortion — to policies and relations firmly grounded in the best interests of

all peoples. The new Libya dissociates itself from the repugnant past and extends its hands in freedom and friendship to build new relationships based on mutual respect and fruitful cooperation.

In conclusion, let me wish the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session full success in solving the issues on its agenda. I express the hope that a spirit of solidarity and cooperation will prevail so that we may create a better world, one blessed with security and stability.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the General National Congress of Libya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sinunguruza (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to address the representatives here today and to express my congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and to his cabinet as well. I also thank his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his excellent work during his presidency. In addition, I extend my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his work for the good and well-being of Member States and their peoples.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to speak from this rostrum about current issues of great importance to my country and the world. It is a pleasure especially because Burundi is right now at a decisive and historic turning point. What I have to say Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, also spoke of last year at the Assembly's sixty-sixth session. A major turn of events has placed a special stamp on our country's history since independence. Democratically elected institutions now serve out the terms entrusted to them by the people in peace, and then, at the end of their tenure, give way to others, also democratically elected.

Over two years ago, in 2010, Burundi organized democratic elections for the second time since 2005, from which were born our current republican institutions, which operate with legitimacy in a restored climate of peace and security. That development gives us great satisfaction, and the Burundian people have every reason to be proud of it. Indeed, whereas my country faced crises on multiple fronts, under which the people suffered economic depletion, social degradation and political discord, seriously demoralizing them, those same people are now steadily getting back on their feet and rediscovering hope as they look to the future. That positive trend demonstrates conclusively a complete break with the spirals of violence and instability that have for decades been our ongoing lot.

Thanks to the collective efforts, strength and spirit of the Burundian people, as well as to the support of our partners, I can confirm here and now that the policies begun in 2005 and carried on after 2010 have produced most encouraging results in many areas. As I said earlier, in the political sphere our country has held democratic elections twice in the recent past, in 2005 and 2010. We have established democratic institutions — the executive branch, the National Assembly and the Senate — all of which are representative of the various elements of Burundi's population, in conformity with the ethnic and gender balances agreed to in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which have been incorporated into the Constitution governing Burundians today. I take pleasure in pointing out that our Senate's composition shows a gender parity such that out of all senates worldwide Burundi's places second in women's representation. That is clearly a significant and bold step forward, because, rather than settle for the minimum set out in the Constitution, our Government voluntarily made the deliberate choice to go further, to ensure that the female majority in the population is represented meaningfully in the country's institutions.

In its determined drive towards change, the Government subsequently established an independent

national commission on human rights and an ombudsman's office. It initiated a zero-tolerance policy designed to eradicate corruption and misuse of public funds, a scourge that has ravaged Burundian society for several years, and also set up adequate enforcement mechanisms. We still have a way to go, as is the case in many other countries, but the structures to get there are firmly in place. In October 2011 the Government adopted a national good governance and anti-corruption strategy for 2011-2015. Also, Government officials, including those at high levels, have signed performance contracts, laying the groundwork for a culture of accountability, which is essential to democratic systems. The members of the Administration and high-level officials are periodically evaluated based on those contracts. If they live up to agreed performance standards they are retained, but otherwise they are replaced.

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement calls for transitional justice mechanisms. We are working towards a transitional justice system that carefully and rigorously balances national reconciliation requirements and those of justice. We need a mechanism that banishes the demons of the past and at the same time affords no opportunity for any type of vengeance or the settling of old scores; in other words, a mechanism to establish the truth and to ensure that there is no recurrence of the acts in question. National consultations were held in 2009, and the related report has been made public. A technical committee was established with a mandate to pave the way for a truth and reconciliation commission. That committee proposed a methodology in its final report, which was submitted through the proper channels in October 2011. The Government had hoped to establish the commission in January 2012, but that decision had to be postponed for technical reasons owing to the fact that further consultations were required, along with specific proposals on the commission's mandate and composition, the selection criteria for its members and matters related to its operating budget.

Besides those achievements in the political sphere, the Government undertook a vast social construction project that yielded positive results. Measures providing free education for children of primary school age enabled millions of little Burundians to attend school, while free medical care for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under five years of age significantly improved maternal and child health care and will help us to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in that regard in the near future. Also, with the participation of the population in communal labour, 2,024 schools, 80 health centres and more than 2,000 potable-water wells were built in just three years.

With respect to socioeconomic development, Burundi is continuing to improve its basic economic infrastructure, including the management of public finances, an improved business climate and good governance. In addition, significant progress has been made with respect to the gradual and orderly return of displaced persons and the repatriation of refugees. All those efforts have taken place within the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction, Vision 2025 and the MDGs. Of the total of 800,000 counted in the census of 2000-2001, all have returned to our country with the exception of 37,000 from the Mtabila camp, who are expected to return by 31 December. Many internally displaced persons have already returned to their homes. We have just finished a profiling survey of those who remain on site, which, in the light of their expressed wishes, will determine the most appropriate and humane resolution of their situation.

The social and economic reintegration of former combatants has yet to be completed and represents a genuine security risk. While it is true that there have been a few isolated instances of insecurity here and there in the country, that is not unique to Burundi. Banditry, which has taken place on a small scale in Burundi, also occurs elsewhere, in many countries. The Government is determined to stamp out all forms of criminality, including armed robbery. It considers security the sine qua non of all social and economic progress, which is why it has embarked on reforms in that regard. The professionalization of the defence and security forces and of the justice system to guarantee the rights of both citizens and foreigners on our soil are among the measures that the Government has written into its programme and will continue to promote as the country moves forward.

In the area of regional integration, an intragovernmental committee has been established to develop a national strategy for regional integration, with the goal of enabling Burundi to take best advantage of its participation in subregional entities and reducing the deficits and disadvantages that stem from belonging to non-regional organizations.

The Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction has reached an advanced stage. The

Government and the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission have made visible progress in a number of areas, as indicated in the outcome of the fifth review of the Peacebuilding Commission, issued on 26 April 2011. Positive results were noted in the areas of political and institutional peacebuilding issues, good governance, human rights, economic issues, vulnerable groups and regional integration, as described earlier.

After this brief survey of the internal situation of my country, I now turn to Burundi's role and position regarding certain international matters. With respect to Burundi's participation in peacekeeping operations, I would like to say that Burundi was one of the two countries to take part in the African Union Mission in Somalia, and that it is pleased with the work accomplished by its soldiers in that context. As the Secretary-General has already done, my country commends the adoption, in August, of the provisional Constitution of Somalia by the National Constituent Assembly in Mogadishu. It congratulates and encourages the Somali delegates and leaders with respect to the new developments under way, aimed at normalizing that country's situation, and to their commitment to ending the transition period and establishing new political institutions that represent all Somalis. Burundi stands ready to share with the Somalis our experience on the question of national reconciliation and in training a national republican army.

With respect to the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, along with the other members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, confirms its strong commitment to the terms of the pact of 15 December 2006 and to its related protocols guaranteeing security, stability and development. We are also a signatory to the declarations agreed by the heads of State and Government of the member States of that organization in Addis Ababa on 15 July, and in Kampala on 7 and 8 August and 7 and 8 September. Along with the other countries of the region, Burundi remains determined to seek solutions to that conflict through existing regional arrangements and in accordance with decisions already taken by the countries of the subregion within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The Assembly will have noted in the course of my statement that the Government of Burundi has made undeniable progress. Still, major challenges remain, not least of them the maintenance of economic growth. Despite the unfavourable international financial and economic context, Burundi, with the support of its partners, must keep its head above water. It must increase its economic growth with the aim of implementing its economic and social development projects. It goes without saying that lack of growth, along with poverty, means fewer schools, fewer hospitals and less progress in the areas of energy and transportation infrastructure — in short, less development for the country and its people. No leader worthy of the title would bequeath such a disastrous economic situation to future generations.

That is why, despite the troubling international economic outlook, guidance and support are more than ever necessary for economies as weak as ours in Burundi. However sustainable it may be at the national level, our economy is still very much dependent on the global economy. I remain convinced that, with the will, commitment and vigour of the people of Burundi, supported by our friends, the scale of our political and socioeconomic gains will continue to expand. For its part, the Government will spare no effort to harness, coordinate and collaborate with the efforts of all parties to fight hand in hand for people's well-being and prosperity, in Burundi and around the world.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the actions taken by the United Nations, which over the 67 years of its existence has moved the world forward at an ever-accelerating pace. I would also like to see the institutional changes envisaged for the Organization take the interests of all Member States into consideration, with all stakeholders taking part in the reform and updating of the system..

Finally, I wish the President of the General Assembly every success throughout his term of office. Long live international cooperation! Long live the United Nations! Long live Burundi!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an addresss by the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Faure (Seychelles): In the modern world, the pace of change, whether political, social or economic, challenges our ability to react in a constructive, sustainable and just manner. And in the face of change, the role of the General Assembly becomes even more important, as the President of the General Assembly has reminded us. We look to the United Nations — our United Nations and our General Assembly — to help us find the common ground needed for the resolution of the big questions of our time. We can truly be a "G-193", as our President has previously remarked.

As an oceanic island nation, Seychelles understands intrinsically that the development of our region depends upon being able to defuse conflict and tension through diplomacy and on defining a framework to properly share all the opportunities that our ocean offers us. In the Indian Ocean, we are particularly concerned with two issues that challenge the proper application of the rule of law in a sustainable manner: the continued problem of maritime piracy and the resolution of the political crisis in Madagascar.

Piracy fundamentally alters our relationship with our ocean. Piracy instils fear and uncertainty. We have two compatriots still being held captive in Somalia, and, as long as they remain separated from their families, our ocean represents risk for our nation, rather than the opportunity that it should. Establishing the rule of law in Somalia is obviously the only true long-term and sustainable solution to piracy. We welcome the moves in Somalia and by the international community to strengthen those efforts.

Seychelles is already working with the central Government of Somalia, as well as the regions of Somaliland and Puntland, to be able to transfer prosecuted prisoners to serve their sentences in their country of origin. This is a key part of building the rule of law in Somalia. More resources are needed, however, to accelerate the building of appropriate infrastructure in those parts of Somalia where stability has been established. We must transform fear and uncertainty into hope and optimism in Somalia itself, as well as in the Indian Ocean.

Seychelles has committed itself to ending the impunity associated with piracy. Piracy has become a global business, operated by a transnational criminal network. Seychelles, in partnership with the Government of the United Kingdom and other international parties, is in the process of setting up a regional anti-piracy prosecution and intelligence centre. The success of this initiative will depend on strong international cooperation. We count on all our partners to work with us to ensure a true long-term solution for this issue.

(*spoke in French*)

The Indian Ocean Commission, which Seychelles is currently chairing, recognizes the work of the United Nations in favour of peace, democracy and human rights, in the interests of the people of its five member States. The crisis facing Madagascar is truly testing the country. It is plunging the population into great economic and social difficulties, and is affecting the entire region. The Seychelles presidency of the Commission continues supporting the implementation of the road map developed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In that context, it organized two meetings between Marc Ravalomanana, the former President, and Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition, in Seychelles, with the dual mediation of Presidents James Michel and Jacob Zuma, head of the SADC troika. Those talks, convened at the recommendation of the most recent SADC Summit, enable us today to look forward to useful and relevant actions for a return to constitutional order in Madagascar, in keeping with the electoral timetable drawn up by the United Nations and Madagascar's Independent National Electoral Commission.

In that regard, we should like to express our thanks to the transitional Government, which has confirmed its contribution to the financing of the elections, in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations. This is also the time to call on all international partners to help ensure fair, transparent and equitable elections in that country, which is anxious to regain its place on the international stage. Through elections Madagascar will return to the rule of law, and it is

through the rule of law in Madagascar that we will be able to depend on sustainable development in the Indian Ocean.

(*spoke in English*)

Respect for the rule of law is also about ensuring that conditions are in place for equity and fairness in the international system as a whole. Small island developing States (SIDS) are too often on the periphery of most international decision-making bodies. Seychelles is proposing that SIDS be considered as offering unique opportunities for testing innovative policies and technologies that can benefit all humankind. In the fight against climate change, SIDS could be at the forefront of groundbreaking solutions.

For example, the Global Island Partnership, co-chaired by Seychelles, Palau and Grenada, has proposed considering debt cancellation for SIDS to enable them to better prepare for climate change adaptation. A large number of SIDS have debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratios in excess of 100 per cent, and such debt forgiveness would give them more flexibility within their own budgets to prepare to face climate change, and thus protect some of the most environmentally sensitive zones on the planet.

With regard to the high volatility of international fuel prices, SIDS can strengthen their resilience through investment in renewable energy. We warmly welcome the Sustainable Energy for All initiative championed by the Secretary-General, and we commit our support to making it a success. While the latest technology in renewable energy often represents a significant capital outlay, by developing pilot projects in SIDS we can potentially create economies based on 100 per cent renewable energy that can then be replicated on a larger scale.

Finally, it is very important that consideration be given to how to better support SIDS within the international trading system. Trade-based support for SIDS could easily be established without disruption or distortion of the global flow of goods and services. Islands are particularly reliant on open access to trade with as many countries as possible. In the context of the current challenges to food security, we urge that all barriers affecting trade with islands, including the economic embargo on Cuba, be lifted, since they serve only to increase the inherent challenges associated with trading from a position of insularity. As an island State, we are aware that the ocean must connect us, not divide us. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development has given new momentum to the concept of the blue economy.

We are also very aware that the ocean will always be a shared space. As an archipelago, we are privileged to be custodians of that space. This year, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, Seychelles and Mauritius, two neighbouring SIDS, have agreed on joint management of an area of extended continental shelf of 3,000 square kilometres. That means that we are sharing the space for the benefit of our two peoples' development. We are sharing the responsibility and the opportunity. We believe that all nations, large or small, must contribute to making this planet a better world to live in.

Seychelles recently announced its intention to stand for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in the year 2017, subject to endorsement by the African Union. We are doing so because we believe that the voices of all nations matter, whether they are large or small, rich or poor. As the smallest African nation, we keenly understand that we need to fight for Africa's economic independence. We are committed to the ideals of the African Union, on the basis of which we attained our political freedom. Now more than ever we must invest in Africa's economic freedom. We must create the means by which Africa's share of trade and financial power can increase at a faster rate. We must empower African institutions. Seychelles adds its voice to the call for more investment in the African Development Bank, including by African nations themselves, by investing their reserves in it.

We must also foster peace on our continent by leading efforts to find solutions to our problems, such as in Somalia, Madagascar and elsewhere in Africa. As a small island developing State, we have a greater understanding than ever of the ways in which our planet is under threat from climate change, and of the need to act now for the sake of all humankind. Most of all, as citizens of planet Earth, we understand that as individuals and as a nation our decisions have consequences beyond our borders. They have consequences for our future and for our children. These are all issues that must be weighed carefully, and it is important that all voices be considered in the debate. We thank the Assembly for giving due consideration to the voice of Seychelles.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Al-Khuzai (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I stand here today in order to convey to the General Assembly the sincere regards and best wishes of the people of Iraq, who wish to share in forging closer bonds of amity and cooperation between peoples and countries, at a time when my country is undergoing a structural transformation at every level, a process that will enable it to reform itself, achieve its goals and consolidate its gains.

We are building a future through the conscious understanding of our history as the cradle of civilization and where the earliest writing system and codification of laws were born. Iraq has been successful in establishing a democratic, pluralistic and federalist State on the basis of an enlightened Constitution, drafted by our people's representatives and voted on by our people.

Our Constitution lays out the aspirations of our people to a free and decent life based on freedom, democracy and the peaceful transfer of authority, citizenship and human rights. Iraq has regained its security, political and economic health in record time and under extremely difficult conditions, where the forces of darkness had been betting that terrorism would derail the experiment. However, thanks to God and the patriotic vigour and self-awareness of our nation, our people were able to turn the page. Our efforts are based on a cultural history of about 10,000 years and on a great human legacy created by the heavenly messages and laudable human experiences that flourished in our glorious land.

Our renewed ambition to build a modern State where the Iraqi people enjoy freedom, development and prosperity requires us to move towards the establishment of good, friendly and equal relations with all nations in the world, within the framework of a cooperative international system governed by clear rules that prevent the problems and crises that could undermine its prosperity and stability. The new Iraq has chosen to embark on the path of cooperation and coordination with the international community in the political, economic and development spheres. Those efforts have been coupled with significant qualitative leaps in our economic growth that will qualify Iraq to return to the realm of the world economy and to emerge within the international economic system, based on a realistic vision that has achieved a number of positive developments over recent years.

According to various indicators, our gross domestic product (GDP) has doubled, which has in turn doubled the per capita share of the GDP. According to projections by the International Monetary Fund, Iraq's GDP is expected to reach approximately $150 billion in 2014. The Iraqi Government has also succeeded in implementing policies to curb inflation and to control governmental spending, in addition to our success in collaborating with the international community to reduce the debt accumulated by the country over past decades.

We have embraced a theory of balanced growth in our national development plans for the upcoming years, in which the oil sector is to serve as the engine for other sectors. Iraq has oil reserves amounting to about 143 billion barrels and potential reserves surpassing the current estimated proven reserves, in addition to large reserves of natural gas amounting to 126.7 trillion cubic feet. We expect investments to contribute to substantial development in the oil industry in Iraq through licensing rounds, establishing refineries and other oil- and gas-related sectors and industries. Estimates suggest that from 2017 to 2020 production will reach more than 10 million barrels of oil per day. The development plan will include all sectors and infrastructure in order to provide secure and promising investment opportunities. The Iraqi Government has prepared legislation to promote confidence in the Iraqi economy by providing legal protection for foreign investments in Iraq through the guarantees listed in the

investment law itself and through Iraq's accession to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency in 2007 and through bilateral treaties to guarantee and protect investments.

We were able to establish solid foundations for political conduct, which has matured rapidly as our people have grown to accept those unlike themselves and to live according to the principle of citizenship, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of expression. We proudly announce that, owing to our freedom of opinion and expression, we do not have a single prisoner jailed for his beliefs or opinions. In our fight against terrorism, human rights remain a cherished principle that we respect and promote as a just cause. We do not have any justification to tamper with such rights.

It is true that confronting terrorism has cost Iraq a lot of blood, tears, sweat and financial resources, but that confrontation has rewarded our people with a permanent immunity against violence. It has also created extreme sensitivity vis-à-vis violence as a means to resolve our strife with others. Therefore, as much as we care about sparing our people the ravages of fighting, we hope that other countries, especially neighbouring countries, will learn from the Iraqi experience and spare their peoples unnecessary turmoil. We call upon them to adopt the principle of negotiation to resolve conflicts and the use of dialogue, logic, reason, laws and the peaceful transfer of power.

That is the essence of Iraq's position regarding the revolutions of the Arab Spring, which we cannot do anything about except to be entirely on the side of the people and their legitimate aspirations, their right to self-determination and the right to choose their own rulers. We share the concerns regarding the issues facing the peoples and States Members of the Organization; those concerns represent a humanitarian, legal and moral burden, because all of us share one world, which is affected by conflicts and their aftermath.

Based on that, the Syrian issue and the humanitarian difficulties facing civilians in that country occupy a great deal of our attention. We think that the escalating violence in Syria is a reason for distress and concern, and it is incumbent upon the leaders gathered here to work in earnest to stop the bloodshed, which claims the lives of tens and perhaps hundreds of people every day in Syria. We would like also to draw attention to the danger of providing the fighting parties with weapons, which only leads to more violence, bloodshed and loss of life. The situation is endangering the social fabric of the Syrian people and may lead to fragmentation and disintegration of that people, whom we cherish and whose unity and sovereignty we care about.

We also realize that the facts on the ground suggest that regional and international intervention could adversely impact the Syrian issue and might cause unlimited chaos and devastation that would spare no one, including the interveners. We therefore sincerely call for dialogue and a peaceful solution as the only means to end a crisis that could engulf the whole region and exacerbate the current situation.

The events in Syria have demonstrated that resolving the crisis through violence and force could double the costs incurred by the Syrians and the region, for such means only increase the suffering of civilians, destroy infrastructure and multiply the number of displaced persons and refugees. That is why we hope that all the parties to the conflict understand that the military solution alone is a dangerous move and gamble. From this rostrum, we call upon kings, presidents and other heads of State here today at this humanitarian gathering to support reconciliation and dialogue among all Syrians and endorse the United Nations and Arab League initiative promoted by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi after the noble efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan reached at an impasse.

In that regard, we do not hide our concern about the consequences of the ongoing crisis, which could only worsen if sectarian and ethnic strife is triggered. That, in turn, could lead the region and its peoples into a spiral of fighting with no end on the horizon. Such a prospect makes it incumbent upon us on us to try in earnest to contain and peacefully resolve the crisis, while preserving the interests of the Syrian people and preventing further deterioration of the situation.

Iraq's initiative aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis continues to stand as a beacon of peace, as we search for an exit acceptable to all the forces of good. Our initiative is based on the following two points. First, Iraq has a keen desire to see Syria remain intact as a State, and we support the hopes and aspirations of the Syrian people for a free and dignified life. Secondly, Iraq is concerned at the possible repercussions of the violence and destruction caused by Syria's internal war and sectarian strife, which we fear could have a spillover effect.

Iraq's unwavering and well-known position does not deviate from the Arab ranks on issues of crucial importance to our Arab nation. We accordingly support the establishment of the State of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territories, with Jerusalem as its capital, and declare our support for the membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations. We also declare our unequivocal rejection of the policies of oppression, Judaization and usurpation of land that Israel pursues without regard for international condemnation of its unjust practices, including the use of brutal force. We also reject Israel's disregard for the repeated international calls to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place its military arsenal and facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We have tirelessly called for the establishment in our region of a zone without nuclear weapons. Therefore, within the international framework, we are contributing to efforts to implement a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, chief among which are nuclear weapons. That is why we endorse the preparations for the Helsinki conference to be held this year with a view to setting up a process that would set up such a zone. Any failure in that endeavour would lead to an arms race in a region that is in dire need of peace and stability.

We condemn and reject the discriminatory policies pursued against religious and ethnic minorities in many countries the world over. We especially condemn the inhumane violations of the rights of Muslims in Myanmar, who face genocide. The world's conscience should not remain untroubled by the gravity of their plight. Such situations run counter to all the principles of human rights law, religious teachings and international conventions.

Our good and friendly relations with our neighbours, the region and the entire world are governed by a balanced foreign policy based on mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in the affairs of others. We also uphold the principles of good-neighbourliness and dialogue in our relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds, as well as with the entire world. Iraq hosted the League of Arab States Summit in March, which marked a return to our active, natural and pioneering role in joint Arab decision-making and action. That was followed by Iraq's hosting of one of the rounds of international negotiations on the Iranian nuclear issue, which we undertook in the objective, balanced and responsible spirit that characterizes Iraq's clear position with respect to that issue. It is a position that declares our firm support for international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while affirming the right of peoples and countries to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

We call upon the international community, represented by the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whom we highly respect and revere, to extend support to Iraq's efforts to exit from the Chapter VII provisions imposed on us as a result of the mistaken policies of the former regime following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, especially as there is no longer any justification for such international action. Iraq is no longer a threat to anyone and has fulfilled most of its obligations, as is confirmed by the renewal of our brotherly relations with the State of Kuwait, seen specifically in the mutual visits of high-level officials of our respective countries and the serious and constructive dialogue based on a sincere desire and sustained efforts to resolve all outstanding issues between us.

I would be remiss if I failed to speak of the repulsive abuse directed at the great Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — and the wave of violent protests that shook the Islamic world because of a ridiculous movie that attacked the image of our Prophet — peace be upon him — a movie that nearly caused relations between East and West to unravel. We need to conduct a sincere and serious examination on how to prevent the recurrence of such insults through an international ban that criminalizes those who insult religions, disrespect religious symbols or insult the great prophets and messengers. Such actions constitute a blatant aggression against everything great, holy and sacred. The recurrence of those obscene actions will supply terrorists with prime material for recruiting angry youth for use in violent actions that threaten peace and security, which could cause many casualties, as recent events have shown.

We therefore clearly need to contain such attacks and prohibit the production and dissemination of similar provocative materials. As nobody in the Islamic world is able to contain the consequences of such disregard for Islamic values and their sanctity, we believe that the United Nations should play a central and constructive role in this matter, with a view to preventing potentially far-reaching and dangerous ramifications.

In conclusion, we, the people and Government of Iraq, extend our hand to the other Member States with a view to increased collaboration aimed at achieving our common goals. Those are noble goals, based on lofty principles and cherished human values, and honour all human beings as supremely deserving of leading a free and safe life and enjoying fundamental freedoms. We hope that when we meet again our world will be a safer place, our peoples will enjoy better conditions and the international climate will have improved.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Machar Teny-Dhurgon (South Sudan): Allow me, at the outset, to join fellow Member States in congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election to preside over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to commend his predecessor for his successful stewardship of the most recent session.

I would like to seize this momentous occasion to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for the passion and compassion he has shown in responding to the various global challenges facing the Organization and, most important, his unwavering personal support for our referendum on self-determination, our independence and the speedy admission of the Republic of South Sudan into the United Nations.

Furthermore, we are also deeply grateful to the Assembly for the warmth, generosity and hospitality accorded to our President when he addressed the Assembly last year. He made that address at the time when the international community was concerned about the viability of our new nation. In the light of the progress we have made and despite recent events, I am pleased to address the Assembly this year under the theme of the sixty-seventh session "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

The Republic of South Sudan achieved its independence peacefully, through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of South Sudan in an internationally supervised referendum, as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The international community played an important role in this, our independence process. We are therefore very thankful to all those who helped us achieve independence, not least the United Nations.

Our declaration of independence on 9 July 2011 did not resolve all the issues between us and the predecessor State, the Republic of the Sudan. These unresolved, post-independence issues include border demarcation, oil infrastructure, security and the final status of the Abyei Area. The bilateral engagement between the two countries failed to achieve an agreement. As a result, the African Union intervened by mandating the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, under former President Thabo Mbeki, to facilitate negotiations between the two parties.

As the situation continued to deteriorate, the Security Council intervened and adopted resolution 2046 (2012). That resolution sets out a clear road map for resolving all the remaining differences between the Sudan and South Sudan, including Abyei, and addresses the conflicts in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Before I discuss the developments in the talks in Addis Ababa, allow me to also brief the Assembly on other issues of importance such as State-building, food security, public service reform, access to education, security and accountability in my country.

We have embarked upon laying a secure foundation for a prosperous, democratic and stable nation by establishing institutions at the national, state and local Government levels for governance and the delivery of services to the people. We believe that food security is not a privilege but a basic right of each and every citizen in South Sudan. No citizen should go hungry. As the saying goes, a hungry man is an angry man. It

will not be good for the stability of the country if we have many hungry and angry men. In our endeavour to achieve food security, we are diversifying the economy by utilizing oil revenues to fuel agriculture and build the necessary basic infrastructure. This is the only way we can benefit from the vast fertile agricultural lands that our country is generously endowed with.

Our public service is functioning satisfactorily, especially after the introduction of far-reaching public service reforms. That has brought about efficiency and transparency in service delivery. We have introduced constructive and effective reforms in our public financial management and have strengthened measures to improve transparency and accountability.

As for education, we have increased access to education for all children in South Sudan. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in 2005, enrolment in our primary schools has more than doubled. In the past year, we continued to strengthen and expand the education sector by further introducing alternative education. This innovative notion of an alternative education system is currently offering accelerated learning programmes to more than 200,000 youth and adults. Favourable conditions and terms of service for teachers have been introduced throughout the country, and the Government is working tirelessly to meet the rapidly increasing demand for secondary education caused by the increase in primary school enrolment.

However, the Government still has a long way to go in providing educational opportunities for our children and youth that prepare them for the future and meet their expectations and aspirations. At this juncture, allow me to commend the launch by the Secretary-General of the Global Initiative on Education, which we hope will open up avenues of collaboration between South Sudan and the international community on improving education access for our children.

Our nascent nation has been tested enormously in its first year of independence. We have been tested by conflicts within and beyond our borders; we have been tested by severe economic hardship; and we have been tested by the revelation of severe abuse of the public trust and funds resulting partly from malpractice and lack of capacity. The Government is undertaking serious corrective measures and institutional capacity-building to address that issue in order to restore public confidence.

My Government is striving harder than ever to combat corruption in our public service. Along with reformed systems for management of public funds and tighter controls, we are combating corruption through the rule of law and through greater transparency and accountability. The Government has enacted legislation that holds public officials accountable and brings the management of our resources closer to international standards.

The Government has published the entire annual budget and opened our books to public scrutiny. By the end of the year, we aim to be up to date on all of the audits of our national accounts since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in 2005. As an accountable Government before our people, we still believe that there is a long way ahead to achieve the efficiency, transparency and accountability in our public service and financial management. Despite the economic peril since the shut-down of oil production, we are, nevertheless, encouraged that the current period of austerity has strengthened our resolve to press ahead in our reform agenda and has allowed us to lay a strong foundation for more efficient and accountable governance beyond the austerity period — tough times never last, but tough people do.

With regard to security, the Republic of South Sudan is currently facing security threats in the form of armed militia groups that are creating insecurity and undermining our young democracy. The Government has accorded the highest priority to reaching a peaceful resolution to these internal conflicts. Four of the armed militia groups have laid down their weapons and have integrated voluntarily into our national army and civilian life.

We believe that the internal and external security of our nation is a prerequisite for having meaningful economic development and social progress. While we are working tirelessly towards achieving and maintaining peace within our borders, critical unresolved issues remain between South Sudan and the Sudan, including border demarcation, citizenship rights, the status of Abyei and oil-related issues. The lack of progress on those post-independence issues has been posing a threat to peace and stable relations between the two countries.

Our relations with the Sudan reached a critical juncture last year, when Khartoum blocked tankers loaded with our crude oil and prevented them from departing from Port Sudan. In addition, Sudan seized

and resold crude oil that we had sold to international customers. By January, we had lost some $800 million in revenues. At that point, my Government was left with no choice but to shut down oil production. The decision was publicly supported by the majority of our people.

In the context of relations of South Sudan and the Sudan, it is incumbent upon my Government to shed some light of what became known as the Heglig or Panthou incident between us and the Republic of the Sudan. That crisis was the result of increasing border tensions and repeated bombings in the border areas of my country by the Sudanese Armed Forces.

In April, our forces clashed with the Sudanese army in an area inside South Sudan, several kilometers south of Heglig. That resulted in our armed forces taking over Heglig temporarily; we acted in self-defence to prevent Heglig from being used as a launching pad for military attacks by the Sudanese Armed Forces on our country.

In compliance with advice from the international community, we withdraw our forces soon thereafter. Although Heglig is historically part of South Sudan, it was not our intention to take it by force. We believe that we can settle the matter through peaceful negotiations.

Another area in which we believe we have not been well understood by the international community is our alleged support for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-North). What may not be fully appreciated by outside observers is that those forces were integral members of the SPLM. But although they fought side by side with us, they were not fighting for the independence of southern Sudan, but for their own cause through alliance with us. Of course, we shared a common vision of creating a new, fundamentally restructured united Sudan of inclusivity, equity and dignity for all, without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or culture. But we also had issues that were specific to our particular situation and which, for us, eventually led to our independence.

It should be recalled that the CPA included a special protocol on Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states that addressed their special grievances. That protocol is yet to be credibly implemented. As the SPLM-North were former allies who contributed significantly to our success in achieving the objectives of our struggle, we obviously have a moral and, indeed, political obligation to assist them in addressing their legitimate grievances, as stipulated and agreed in the CPA.

In that connection, South Sudan is currently carrying the burden of accommodating an increasing number of refugees from the two areas. We therefore call upon the international community to assist in meeting the humanitarian needs of the refugees within South Sudan, as well as throughout the Sudanese territory for those internally displaced by the conflict.

Our President stated in his statement at our independence celebration:

> "We cannot abandon them, but would support their cause peacefully through negotiated settlement between them and the Government of the Sudan".

South Sudan will use its good offices as a former ally of the SPLM-North to assist the Sudan by acting as an honest broker in mediating a peaceful, but just, resolution of the conflict. We believe that our role as honest brokers will in the long term assist our neighbour to the north, the Government of the Sudan, to achieve peace and stability. We are glad that the United Nations recognizes that there can be no military solution to the conflict and that a negotiated settlement is the way forward.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, today, President Salva Kiir Mayardit and President Omer Hassan A. Al-Bashir signed an agreement that will allow the two countries to pursue their national development efforts under a secure and lasting peace. We are hopeful that the new agreement with the Sudan will lead to the resolution of our differences on security, borders and the use of petroleum infrastructure.

It is envisaged that if each side upholds its part of this agreement, the most significant causes of dispute between our two countries will have been amicably resolved. Diplomacy will have won, and reason will have prevailed.

With the resolution of those key matters, preparations to resume oil production in South Sudan will now begin. The following agreements were signed today between our two countries: first, the Agreement Concerning Oil and Related Economic Matters; second, the Framework Agreement on the Status of Nationals of the Other State; third, the Agreement on the Demarcation of the Boundary; fourth, an agreement on border issues; fifth, the Agreement on a Framework for Cooperation on Central Banking Issues; sixth, the Agreement on Trade and Trade-related Issues; seventh, the Agreement on Certain Economic Matters: Division of Assets and Liabilities, Arrears and Claims and Joint

Approach to the International Community; and, finally, eighth, the Framework Agreement to Facilitate Payment of Post-Service Benefits.

While we are happy with all that has been agreed today by our two countries, I wish to inform the General Assembly that we have failed to reach agreement on Abyei. President Al-Bashir has rejected the proposal of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, as stipulated under Security Council resolution 2046 (2012). It is now incumbent upon the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council, together with the United Nations Security Council, to take the action necessary to move forward.

We are thankful to both the AU Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council for their great efforts to bring about this agreement between our two countries.

As our President stated in this forum one year ago, "The ambition of the people of South Sudan is to be able to transform their country into a regional agro-industrial powerhouse" (see A/66/PV.19), with reduced dependence on external assistance, and the potential to feed the people of South Sudan and to be a breadbasket for East Africa.

Our strategy is aimed at utilizing oil wealth as a catalyst to stimulate our economic development potential, with an emphasis on agriculture.

We are conscious of the fact that we cannot achieve those goals alone. We need continued support from friends, partners and the international community. We are confident that together we shall overcome the challenges ahead. I take this opportunity once more, on behalf of the people and the Government of South Sudan, to express our profound gratitude for the support rendered to us by the United Nations, the AU, regional organizations, friends and partners.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, allow me to reiterate the resolve and the commitment of the people and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to be a productive and active member of this global family of nations, and to make their contribution to promoting world peace and prosperity for all humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): I wish at the outset to extend my heartiest congratulations and the assurances of my cooperation and highest esteem to President Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to his leadership and guidance throughout this session.

I extend congratulations also to your predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on a job well done and for his continued service to the international community.

The theme of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is judicious, for it accurately summarizes how we as nations need to act in these precarious times of insecurity and uncertainty. These times and circumstances call for a heightened sense of urgency and a stronger will among all nations to work with and through the United Nations in embracing multilateralism in its truest form.

The sixty-seventh session of the Assembly is taking place in an environment of continued challenges to international peace and security; international democracy is being tested; there is unbearable poverty throughout the world; the sluggish recovery of the

world's economy provides little hope; and disasters induced by climate change are becoming more rampant.

As we look around our global community, we ask ourselves what we can do to solve the many problems we face, and how we can find and maintain the peace that we so desire. Maybe if we ask ourselves not as individuals but as nations what peace is, then, perhaps, we can collectively resolve to find the answer so as to achieve peace.

For Antigua and Barbuda, peace means respect for human rights and the differences of others and the protection of women, children and the elderly. Peace is devoid of greed that ends in unparalleled wealth for a few and nauseating poverty for many. Peace means global health awareness, protection and accessibility for all. Peace means democracies with active global citizens, by non-violent change. Peace means eliminating nuclear weapons and controlling small arms.

Peace is free of violence and requires the acceptance of differences in race, gender and religion. Peace is a position from which to value the limits of nature's resources, and it is characterized by the absence of the ignorance and shortsightedness that leads some to selfishly plunder Earth's plenty. Peace is the understanding that climate change is real and that sustainability should be our priority. Peace means fair trade and equality of equity in globalization.

Peace is the elimination of corruption in Government. Peace is the understanding and the recognition that the world's problems can be solved only by the inclusion of all countries. Peace therefore involves a wider and equal representation in the Security Council rather than membership by a selected few.

In 2011, we celebrated the International Year for Peoples of African Descent. That year has passed, and gone from the international agenda is the issue of reparations for slavery, which is central to fighting racism and racial discrimination and nurturing a culture of peace among nations. The legacy of racial violence, segregation and slavery against peoples of African descent has severely impaired our advancement as nations, communities and individuals across the political, social and, most importantly, the economical spectrums. In the words of Kwame Nkrumah, we can no longer afford the luxury of delay. The time has come for us to revisit the issue of reparations for slavery and place it at the top of the international agenda.

Over 200 million persons in the Americas depend on us. That is why I am reiterating a call I made in the Hall in 2011 for former slave States to begin the reconciliation process by issuing formal apologies for the crimes committed by the nations or their citizens over the 400 years of the African slave trade. While nations in the developing world continue to grapple with the effects of a world economic crisis that is not of their own making, I call on former slave States to back up their apologies with new commitments to the economic development of those nations that have suffered from that human tragedy.

Transnational crime is threatening the very existence of peace in Antigua and Barbuda. Our small size and lack of human and financial resources make it difficult for us, as a small island nation, to address that problem in an effective manner. The crime and violence fuelled by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are jeopardizing our major industries, including tourism. Our health-care systems are weighted down, and families are being torn apart. Nevertheless, crime prevention and small arms control is a priority for my Government. It is important to note that neither Antigua and Barbuda nor our Caribbean Community brothers and sisters manufacture small arms or light weapons, yet one recent estimate indicates that there are 1.6 million illegal firearms in the region.

Additionally, Antigua and Barbuda is deeply saddened by the fact that, despite significant efforts, strong will on the part of the majority of States and the fact that a compromise was potentially within reach, there was no agreement on a text for the recently discussed legally binding arms trade treaty. The Assembly can rest assured that Antigua and Barbuda will not give up, and we will continue to advocate for a legally binding treaty that will eliminate the threat that is crippling our region.

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to the rule of law and the process it enables for direct political dialogue and cooperation among all States and international actors. The rule of law facilitates international peace and security, human rights and development for all. Our joint responses to the threats to peace and security, along with the opportunities arising from various political, economic and social instabilities, must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the basis for friendly coexistence and interdependence between and among States.

My Government upholds the ideals of the recently concluded High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels and stands committed to upholding that very important principle.

The Caribbean has been known as a zone of peace. We value our ability to live and work together despite our different religious and political beliefs and ethnic backgrounds. Antigua and Barbuda therefore condemns the brutal killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya and the destruction of the United States Consulate in Libya. We condemn any acts of violence or killings disguised as actions to defend religious belief. If we are to build an environment of peace around the world, we must show tolerance for all peoples and beliefs.

The dangers posed by non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction are real and should be seen by all countries, large and small, as the single most destructive element threatening international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda is particularly concerned by the lack of progress in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. There should be no compromise on that issue. Antigua and Barbuda remains resolute in our continued call for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The recently concluded Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development provided an international platform from which to address the social, economic and environmental challenges affecting the international community. Those challenges are direct threats to humankind and oftentimes jeopardize peace and security for all.

In resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want", Antigua and Barbuda saw the Rio+20 Conference as securing comprehensive and inclusive sustainability for small island nations, whose survival is contingent on an outcome of commitments and actions from the Conference.

At the recently concluded summit of the Alliance of Small Island States, my country joined with other small island States in sending a strong message to the international community on the need for bold and ambitious actions. We cannot wait for our lands to disappear before we act. We must act now to respond to the climate crisis and ensure that not a single country is sacrificed, no matter how small.

The threat is real. Our sea levels are rising, there is coral bleaching beyond our shores, and hurricanes are becoming more recurrent and severe. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change needs to take concrete steps in order to protect small island developing States and other exposed countries from the threats of climate change.

The responsibility to mitigate climate change should be at the forefront of the collective consciousness of both developing and developed countries. However, developed countries should accept their responsibilities as the leading contributors to the extremely high levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which are now threatening the welfare of present and future generations. It is my Government's hope that the selfish act of inaction will dissipate in Doha and that a positive outcome in the climate change negotiations will usher in new hopes for humanity and compassion for our planet.

Antigua and Barbuda is doing its part to protect Mother Earth. My Government has embarked on a renewable energy mandate. We are now shifting our focus towards harvesting water and wind to meet our energy needs. We are protecting our ecosystem with strong legislation, and we are replanting mangroves and protecting areas that are sensitive to pollutants. Climate change and sustainability are high on my Government's development and investment priorities, and we are ensuring that new and refurbished private and commercial investments are in line with our green approach to our society.

My Government also joins with member States of the Alliance of Small Island States in calling on the General Assembly to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States in order to raise awareness of the special situation of our members and mobilize international support for our sustainable development.

Over the past year, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti has made important progress in its support to the Haitian people's efforts to consolidate democracy, stability and the rule of law and to move forward on the path to social and economic development. In spite of the progress made, the situation in Haiti remains fragile, as the country strives to overcome its daunting political, social and economic challenges.

I therefore stress the need for adequate funding and continued implementation of the Mission in Haiti. I would like to reiterate my Government's strong support for the Mission in Haiti and to stress that peace will

only be achieved if we simultaneously address issues of security, national reconciliation and development. I also call on those nations that pledged assistance to Haiti to honour their commitments. Those pledges are urgently needed, now that the rebuilding phase is progressing under a new Administration.

It has been nearly five years since we started to see a sharp downturn in the world's economy. Unfortunately, Antigua and Barbuda is among the small and developing States that have yet to see significant improvements. While we have made several attempts to curtail the haemorrhaging of our fragile economies, it must be said that we need greater cooperation, flexibility and inclusion on the part of our developed partners. Gross domestic product can no longer be the criterion used in accessing concessionary financing and other international financial relief; instead, mechanisms should be put in place that take into consideration a host of other elements, including the fragility of economies.

We are still in a crisis, a crisis of confidence in global governance and the institutional capacity for managing the international financial system, international trade and international development policies. We are also living in the era of globalization where cooperative collectives — and not ambitious and selfish empires — must be the order of the day in international financial governance. A privileged few should never be allowed to make financial decisions that impact the socioeconomic livelihood of millions without regard for that excluded majority. Economic prosperity should be shared equally among countries and within countries. The exclusive clubs of the Group of Eight and the Group of 20 cannot repair the fragmented international financial system without taking due consideration of the majority of nations left on the outside with much to offer.

My Government calls on developed countries and the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to guarantee that their response with regard to international tax matters will involve improved international cooperation on tax issues through comprehensive and supportive frameworks that ensure the involvement and equal treatment of small jurisdictions like Antigua and Barbuda without the nuances of inappropriately branding us as tax havens.

Antigua and Barbuda has been proactive in its approach to diversifying our economy. We entered into the international gaming sector abiding by all prescribed international standards. Unfortunately, our friend and developed partner, the United States of America, was of the view that our gaming sector contravened its domestic laws. Antigua and Barbuda found it appropriate to seek international redress on the matter through the dispute resolution mechanism at the World Trade Organization. We prevailed, and the United States was ordered to compensate Antigua and Barbuda for its losses. Yet, years later, Antigua and Barbuda is still engaging in negotiations with the United States. I therefore call on the Government of the United States to work with us to quickly resolve the matter so that we can arrive at a settlement that is fair and just. I also call on the United States to work cooperatively with Antigua and Barbuda and other remote gaming jurisdictions to forge an enlightened, reasonable and reasoned way of addressing the regulation and licensing of remote gaming services.

While we are on the matter of trade disputes, it has been decades since the United States instituted its embargo on Cuba. Time and time again the international community, acting through the General Assembly, has called on the United States to lift that trade embargo. However, it continues unabated. Since its inception, the embargo has inflicted untold economic damage on the Cuban people, caused shortages and needless suffering to the Cuban population, limited and restrained the development of the country and seriously damaged the Cuban economy. Through all of that, the Cuban people have managed to preserve their sovereignty, independence and right to self-determination. As a country committed to the norms of the multilateral trading system and to the freedom of trade and navigation and a country that rejects the extraterritorial application of another country's national laws, Antigua and Barbuda calls on the United States to immediately and unconditionally lift its economic embargo against the people of Cuba. It is time to turn a new page of peace, cooperation and understanding, a time for global healing and international community-building. The continuation of the embargo further destroys the very fabric of hope that we have created as a community of nations in order to resolve the world's issues.

The world is changing. Economies, policies and countries are becoming more intertwined than ever before. Antigua and Barbuda sees those relationships of integration as positive steps towards achieving a world that is not dominated by a few but represents rather a

unification of leadership in the hope of combating most of the world's shortcomings.

The smaller developing countries in the Caribbean and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) are poised to make great strides in our integration agenda. The ratification of the OECS Economic Union is a major step in that direction. We have a stable shared currency, with a monetary council that has been instrumental in preventing further deterioration of our economies. There have been renewed commitments by all of the Caribbean Community countries to work tirelessly to realize the full potential of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Antigua and Barbuda has joined the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, an institution that is built on the principles of solidarity, complementarity and cooperation. The Community of Latin America and Caribbean States — a new integration arm within our region — the geographical position of our countries, our shared cultures and values and our desires as developing partners for a more just global community that is built on fairness and peace give my Government hope that all is not lost as regards multilateralism.

Antigua and Barbuda faces many challenges in the prevention, care and treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the leading causes of death in Antigua and Barbuda, with cancer and heart disease being the top two causes. The burdens of the cost, the loss of productivity and the disabilities as a result of chronic diseases continue to weigh heavy on our health-care system, since treatment for those diseases and their complications, including dialysis, chemotherapy and drug therapy, continue to be offered free of cost to patients. The fight against NCDs remains high, therefore, on Antigua and Barbuda's health agenda.

Following our participation in the United Nations High-level Meeting on the subject last year, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda approved the establishment of a multisectoral NCD commission to provide leadership in that critical area, drafted legislation for tobacco control, engaged civil society and non-governmental organizations in drafting an NCD policy and action plan and has supported plans for the development of a comprehensive cancer treatment centre in Antigua and Barbuda to serve the OECS. The Ministries of Health and Agriculture continue to collaborate in the development of a food policy that will address some of the risk factors for NCDs.

The fight against HIV/AIDS in my region is also real. The figures are heartbreaking, and the outlook is troubling. Despite some progress, much still needs to be done to achieve the 2015 goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, support and care. My Government is in the process of updating the code of conduct to prevent discrimination in the workplace against persons living with HIV/AIDS. We will not tolerate injustice, intolerance and violence of any kind against persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Many might believe that for countries like Antigua and Barbuda, as a small island developing State, our only concern is for development, but I stand here today with grave concern that the disregard for world peace and security threatens the very existence of humankind and will push the international community into further chaos and destruction. We cannot ignore from our tiny peaceful shores the images that glare from our TV screens of unrest, protest and demonstrations from various corners of the world. The images are daunting, the voices of change are deafening and the use of force or threat of use of force to suppress the voices of democracy is intolerable. The United Nations has to be unified in its response so as to act in a peaceful manner while protecting the rights of populations near and far.

The situation in Syria is disheartening. Children, women and the elderly must be protected. I call on both sides to exercise restraint and allow humanitarian relief supplies to enter Syria. I also call on all nations to cease supplying arms to the two sides in the conflict. As leaders, our priority must be to urge all parties in Syria to implement a ceasefire and stop the violence immediately and completely. Every effort must be made to implement Mr. Annan's six-point proposal and the relevant Security Council resolutions. The United Nations and the Arab League must lead in that process. Any threats of war must be suppressed, and negotiation and mediation should be the order of the day. If it is not addressed, the Syrian crisis will soon pose a serious threat to international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda will continue to give its support to a just, peaceful and appropriate settlement of the Syrian crisis at an early date.

These are undeniably perilous times. An event can occur in a distant part of the globe that can severely impact Antigua and Barbuda domestically, an event

that completely ignores the importance of achieving tolerance by peaceful means. Our response may be one of indignation but also a sense that we live in a perilous atmosphere characterized by the intolerance of peace. The multiplicity and interconnectedness of the many global threats and challenges we face will test the abilities of this Assembly. Is the United Nations up to the task?

I am confident that by sharing our collective wisdom and using it as a resource, the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session will take decisions of meaningful and enduring benefit and peace for the peoples of the world. I am equally confident that our deliberations can lead to solutions that will ensure the protection of all our peoples. I therefore call on all of us, as world leaders, to rise to the challenges and move with haste to bring peace to the citizens of the world. We are leaders and caretakers of humankind and, as such, our response to those challenges will be recorded in the books of history, which will reveal whether we had the ability to act with constraint, effectiveness and fairness in order to achieve stability through peaceful means. Let peace reign.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.14

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.55 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mikati (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that the Assembly's work will be crowned with success, thanks to his rich diplomatic experience and expertise. I assure him of Lebanon's full support in his efforts. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for his tireless efforts and remarkable achievements. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his keen concern over critical global issues, especially those related to the Middle East, in particular my country, Lebanon, which was mentioned in his annual report (A/67/1).

Lebanon, a founding State Member of the United Nations, reiterates its commitment to the noble principles and human values that make up the founding pillars of the Organization. Those standards enable it to act globally for justice, freedom, prosperity and peace and to shoulder its responsibility to address the world's ongoing challenges. Those challenges test the international Organization's credibility, efficiency, status, and role in ensuring social freedom, political stability and economic independence for all peoples of the world, free from hegemony, polarization, fear and double standards.

In the light of the major developments and changes that have occurred since the Second World War, it has become necessary to strengthen the role of the General Assembly as a universal organ. That should preclude the Security Council privileges, which are currently restricted to a limited number of countries that control crucial decisions, in particular those related to war and peace. In that regard, in order to ensure greater justice and democracy, the structure, privileges and expansion of the Security Council should be reconsidered. The new global political, economic and social realities should be taken into account by extending the membership so as to enable smaller countries to have greater representation. That would fulfil the United Nations principles of equality and justice among peoples.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Our meeting today takes place at a time of major global developments and changes, in particular for Arab nations. Political reform had therefore become inevitable in order to achieve democracy and to lay the foundations for freedom and respect for human rights. However, those legitimate demands can be attained solely through a peaceful transition and dialogue, not violence and foreign intervention, which will lead only to more chaos, injustice and division, increasing the number of refugees and exacerbating related humanitarian consequences. Therefore, with regard to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon reaffirms its policy of disassociation at the political and the security levels in order to maintain its stability and balance of powers and in order to avoid unnecessary repercussions and risks.

Lebanon has not refrained from providing humanitarian support to the displaced Syrians in Lebanon, in an effort to alleviate their suffering. However, Lebanon alone cannot deal with the increasing number of displaced Syrians and their humanitarian needs. We have provided assistance, but the number of displaced persons has risen and exceeded our capacities. We can no longer absorb them on our own. More assistance by relevant international bodies is needed to help us in that regard.

The security repercussions of the Syrian crisis threaten civic peace and stability at the local level and in the Middle East. The international community must make greater efforts to reach a political solution between the parties in Syria, in order to put an end to the violence that is claiming hundreds of innocent lives every day.

As we support the freedom and legitimate rights of all people, we need to raise a crucial issue, namely, the right of the fraternal Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. The recognition of the Palestinian State and its acceptance as a full Member of this international Organization and its affiliated agencies should pave the way for a just political solution to the Palestinian question and correct the ongoing historical injustice that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people since 1948.

Lebanon is committed to maintaining stability and security in southern Lebanon, and we reaffirm our commitment to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). However, the continuous Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty by air, land and sea — in excess of 9,000 violations since 2006 — are limiting the freedom of action of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and threatening the security of its members, once again violating international resolutions, specifically resolution 1701 (2006).

We appeal to the international community to pressure Israel to respect international resolutions and international law, to immediately withdraw from occupied North Ghajar, the Shaba'a farmlands and the Kfar Shouba hills, and to bring to an end the continuous threats to Lebanon's security. Lebanon values UNIFIL's role and its sacrifices, as well as its ongoing cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese army, and we express our gratitude to all participating and supporting countries.

Lebanon calls for the full implementation of resolution 66/192, of 22 December 2011, regarding the oil slick on its shores during the Israeli 2006 war on Lebanon, and demands compensation, in application of paragraph 4 of that resolution.

We reiterate our commitment to defend our exclusive economic area and our maritime borders as set by international law and in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which affirms our right to exploit our wealth and natural resources.

Lebanon, a vital crossroads of religions, beliefs, cultures and civilizations, is a country committed to divine and human values. We are fully aware that diversity and difference are an integral part of life in our region and throughout the world. We reiterate our commitment to freedom of expression, tolerance and dialogue. In the words of Pope John Paul II, Lebanon is not merely a country, it is a message. We consider prejudice towards all religions and prophets a clear aggression against the dignity, values and feelings of all believers, for it can only instigate conflict, violence and reactions that we condemn and could never accept. No one could accept them.

We therefore emphasize the importance and necessity of dialogue between civilizations and cultures. Building trust and fostering rules of conduct binding on all are essential to end once and for all the desecration of religious symbols, as well as to ensure respect for people's feelings and their freedom of belief. Such efforts can put an end to the extreme reactions and condemnable practices that we have unfortunately witnessed recently in certain countries. Respect for

religion does not restrict freedom of expression; rather, it is a rational practice of such freedom.

In that spirit, Lebanon has launched a national dialogue among the different Lebanese constituencies based on established national principles that were agreed on and developed under the Baabda Declaration (A/66/849, annex), which was welcomed by the Security Council. Dialogue is considered the best means for ensuring stability in Lebanon.

Lebanon is committed to peace and strives for its achievement, especially in the Middle East, a region we would like to be an oasis of peace, free of weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we should remember that Israel is the only country in the region to possess nuclear weapons and that it continues to refuse to ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a position that constitutes an ongoing threat to peace and security in the region and the world at large.

We would like to emphasize once more the need for a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue, while stressing countries' right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes and avoiding double standards and selectivity, a problem that is faced by many regions in the world and by our region in particular. We also welcome ongoing international efforts to combat terrorism, the scourge of our time.

The peace we strive for is founded on what is right, not a fait accompli peace. The justice we strive for, especially in our region, is far removed from the selectivity and double standards that are, unfortunately, the case globally, especially in the Middle East. Our region is still suffering from the consequences of the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948, and from its ongoing occupation of Arab territories in complete disregard for international law and United Nations resolutions.

Peace, freedom and justice are the pillars for attaining both security and stability. They will pave the way to the eradication of oppression, extremism, hegemony and terrorism in our world. Stability cannot exist without a Palestinian spring, and a Palestinian spring can occur only through the full implementation of the Palestinians' right to self-determination on their land.

The Arab world is witnessing one of the most critical periods of its modern history. We have reached a crossroads where societies must make choices that will translate their ambitions into reality. We therefore request the international community to draw up a serious economic, cultural and development road map to assist those countries in that newly reached breakthrough. Our young Arab societies are in need of enlightenment and development that can be achieved only by providing education and employment to put an end to ignorance and improve our living standards. That will also certainly contribute to fighting extremism.

We therefore suggest that countries step forward with their technical expertise while others offer financial assistance to draft a plan that could be implemented through the framework of a new institution to assist young men and women working in public administration to promote good governance, efficiency and productivity in governmental agencies. From that perspective, I propose to establish an institution in Beirut that will soon be able to offer an integrated programme on good governance.

As the Middle East is witnessing the most tumultous period of its history, we call on the international community to perceive Lebanon as the beacon of hope and message of freedom and pluralism that it is. Lebanon is not merely a small nation in need of shelter in a stormy region, and we are not asking for protection to ensure our own survival. We are, rather, calling on the Assembly to see us in the light of the role that we have repeatedly played. Despite all the difficulties we are facing, our country, which is small geographically but large in its global presence, has proved itself to be the epitome of a democratic, tolerant and pluralistic country among its neighbours.

It is therefore the duty of the international community to protect Lebanon, now and in the future, from the turbulence of the region and to help us so that we may thrive, flourish and shine our rays all over the Middle East. Only then will the United Nations provide our unstable region with a genuine source of inspiration, a viable, vibrant nation, an example and model of civil and religious liberties, social diversity and political freedom.

I call on all those here not to perceive Lebanon as a responsibility but as an opportunity, an opportunity to provide the safest and fastest path to all that the Middle East can be — democratic, peaceful and prosperous. Let us work to protect Lebanon from harm so we can

maintain peace in the Middle East and the world as a whole.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English text provided by the delegation*): I warmly congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and I thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his excellent leadership of the Assembly during the previous session. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts on behalf of the United Nations in the past year.

Our new world is experiencing popular uprisings, intra-State conflicts, climate change disasters, global financial crises, food and energy insecurity, human rights violations, terrorism and so forth. These and other experiences call for collective efforts towards peaceful resolution at the United Nations. I therefore commend the theme for this year's deliberations, namely, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

In that context, I would like to recall the role of my father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, who from this rostrum 38 years ago espoused the principles of friendship towards all and malice towards none, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the renunciation of the use of force in international relations, and contributing to global peace and security. In essence, his policy at home and abroad was based on justice and peace. At home, during my last tenure as Prime Minister, in 1997, those policy guidelines inspired me to settle a 20-year conflict that had cost more than 20,000 lives, through the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. In February 2009, during my current tenure, I was able to peacefully settle the volatile mutiny of our border guards, thus averting a dangerous crisis.

We have also put increased emphasis on improving external relations. I was able to resolve a 25-year-old issue with India on sharing the water of the River Ganges with the signing in 1996 of the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty. Last year the 2011 Protocol to our 1974 Land Boundary Agreement settled a border demarcation issue that had gone unresolved for 64 years. We also addressed mutual concerns about a dam proposed by India across a common river. With our other neighbour, Myanmar, we reached a peaceful settlement of a 41-year maritime boundary dispute through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Our national and international commitment to peace has also been demonstrated by our position among the top contributors to United Nations peacekeeping and as a founding member of the Peacebuilding Commission. As the current Chair of the Commission, on 25 September we held an event entitled "Peacebuilding: the way forward towards sustainable peace and security", in which many here participated. As a member of the Human Rights Council and of the Economic and Social Council, we promote justice, peace, democracy, gender equality, secularism, the rule of law and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. As a member of the executive bodies of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Partnerships, UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization and the Universal Postal Union, we advocate setting global norms and standards.

In my four decades in politics for the welfare of the people, I have learned that peace prevails when justice prevails, both within States and in relations between States. Only justice can ensure peace, which is so vital for development, and justice is possible only through democracy, which empowers people. The alternative — the absence of democracy — means social injustice, poverty, inequality, deprivation and

marginalization, which encourage extremism and terrorism. We are therefore strengthening democracy and justice by empowering people by eradicating poverty, hunger, inequality and deprivation and by establishing social safety nets, creating jobs, promoting inclusiveness, sustained growth and human development, and by countering terrorism.

The principles to which I have just referred also encouraged me to present a model for people's empowerment and development at the sixty-sixth session (see A/66/PV.22). The model encompasses six mutually reinforcing peace multipliers: first, eradicating poverty and hunger; secondly, reducing inequality; thirdly, mitigating deprivation; fourthly, including excluded persons; fifthly, accelerating human development; and sixthly, eliminating terrorism. That model was endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 66/224, adopted by consensus last year. In Dhaka, on 5 and 6 August 2012, we held an international conference to discuss the model, and the 62 participating countries supported its consideration at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I highly appreciate their support. I also seek the Assembly's support for disseminating the model.

In our efforts to achieve people's empowerment, parliamentary standing committees were established during the first session of the Parliament that was constituted immediately after the general elections of 2008. There are 50 such committees, and many are chaired by members of Parliament from the opposition bench. We also introduced the Prime Minister's question time and strengthened commissions on anti-corruption, human rights and information. We ensured an independent, proactive judiciary, strengthened the rule of law and established human rights, accountability, secularism and rights of minorities. We proceeded with regional multimodal connectivity to empower all people. We modernized education in madrasas. We entrenched the election commission and democratic institutions for holding 5,182 elections in a completely free and credible atmosphere. We freed and expanded the media, with 24 private television channels, 7 news agencies, 11 FM and 14 community radio stations, 320 daily newspapers and 151 periodicals.

Since justice is the basis for empowering people for peace and development, women should have an equal role. To expedite the process of their empowerment, girls are provided free education up to higher secondary school under our new education policy. Women are also encouraged to be active in our national life. Women's leadership has been developed from the grass-roots level to the national level. Their participation in politics has been increased since the general elections in 2008. So far, 12,838 women have been elected to local Government bodies, and 69 women are members of the Parliament, constituting 20 per cent of the total number of members of Parliament. Besides my being the Prime Minister and Leader of the House, other women include the Opposition Leader, the Deputy Leader of the House, five Cabinet ministers and a Whip. Of general Government posts, 30 per cent are reserved for women, some of whom serve in very senior positions in the judicial, administrative and diplomatic fields, as well as in the armed and law enforcement services and as United Nations peacekeepers.

Our efforts to empower people in my present tenure have so far helped in reducing poverty by 10 per cent, attaining a gross domestic product growth rate of 6.5 per cent and enhancing per capita income by 34.6 per cent. They have helped to reduce overall inflation from double digits to 4.97 per cent, with food inflation declining from 13 per cent in 2008 to 2.25 per cent at present. Our efforts have assisted in the employment of 7.5 million in the private sector and half a million in the public sector. Exports have increased annually by 19 per cent over 2009 figures to $24.3 billion in 2011-2012. We have helped to arrange overseas jobs for 1.87 million nationals, increasing annual inward remittances by 10 per cent over 2009 to $12 billion in 2011-2012. We have maintained macroeconomic stability. We have expanded information and communications technology facilities among the lowest tier of local Government to ensure the availability of e-services to rural people. Nearly 100 per cent of school-age children are enrolled in in primary schools. We have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education and have established 12,000 community clinics to ensure nutrition and health care for rural people, especially mothers and children. A climate change trust fund has been set up to implement adaptation and mitigation programmes. All those undertakings have helped in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 3, 4 and 5, on gender parity and infant and maternal mortality, ahead of 2015.

Our achievements have earned us global recognition through MDG, South-South and Food and Agriculture Organization awards. Importantly, the Secretary-General has acknowledged those achievements by

including me as a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition Lead Group and as a champion for the Education First initiative. We welcome his high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda, which should consider coherence with the sustainable development goals and should prioritize poverty, hunger, nutrition, global food and energy security, climate change and global partnership for sustainable development.

I hope that the high-level panel will also consider formulating a position on the painful plight of autistic and disadvantaged children, who constitute about 1 per cent of the world's population. At home, we have put in place 55 special-needs schools and a centre for neurodevelopment and autism in children. In July 2011, with the collaboration of the World Health Organization and Autism Speaks, we launched a global autism public health initiative. At the current Assembly session we will submit a draft resolution on the autism spectrum disorder, which I hope will receive the Assembly's support.

Our efforts are hindered by unjust developments resulting from climate change, such as increasing poverty, property loss, human displacement and the consequent terrorism. The inevitable sea-level rise will create mass movements of displaced migrants. A new legal regime ensuring social, cultural and economic rehabilitation of climate migrants — which I called for at the Assembly's sixty-fourth session — must be put in place.

It was also emphasized at the Dhaka meeting in 2011 of the Climate Vulnerable Forum that an alliance of countries most vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels has to be forged. As the current Chair of the Forum, Bangladesh launched the second edition of the Climate Vulnerability Monitor yesterday in New York. I also reiterate my call for an international agreement limiting greenhouse-gas emissions on the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities, on early operationalization of the Green Climate Fund for, inter alia, adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer.

Closely linked to climate change is global food and energy security. The increase of food and energy prices due to climate change can be very disturbing indeed. It has dangerous implications for least developed countries, which is why they need greater international support for socioeconomic security, for duty-free and quota-free access of their products to all markets, for the fulfilment of official development assistance commitments, for an equal voice in Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions, and for free movement of labour to all countries. In fact, we should immediately implement Mode IV of the General Agreement on Trade in Services to benefit both sending and receiving countries.

We should also ensure documentation, safe migration and the protection of the rights of migrant workers, especially women and children, as a shared responsibility of sending and receiving States in the World Trade Organization.

The blatant injustice perpetrated against, and murder, torture and humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israel marks a shameful chapter in human history. Deep frustrations at the injustice in Palestine and in other places also fuel terrorism. It is vital to resolve the Palestine and similar burning questions through justice and the establishment of democratic rights.

In Bangladesh, from 2001 to 2006, an environment of terrorism prevailed. Under the patronage of the previous BNP-Jamaat Government, such internationally banned terrorist outfits as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahrir and Lashkar-e-Toiba, among others, carried out bomb and grenade attacks with impunity, every other day, to eliminate the secular and progressive parties. Prominent instances were the bomb attacks on four cinemas killing 19 people on 5 December 2002; the grenade attack on the British High Commissioner on 21 May 2004; bomb blasts at 500 places in 63 out of 64 districts within a span of half an hour on 17 August 2005; grenade and firearm attacks that killed former Finance Minister and Executive Director of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Mr. S.A.M.S. Kibria, MP, Mr. Ahsanullah Master, MP, Mr. Mumtazuddin, MP, and two popular judges inside the court premises.

I was myself a target of a grenade attack at a public meeting on 21 August 2004, which left 24 people dead and nearly 500 injured. Somehow, I miraculously survived. Another heinous kind of terrorism that we experienced in Bangladesh was the brutal assassination of my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and 18 members of our family on 15 August 1975 by some misguided army personnel seeking to usurp State power. At that time, I was abroad with my sister, Sheikh Rehana, and thus escaped death. In view of our nation's tragic experiences with

terrorism, my Government has adopted a firm policy of zero tolerance of terrorism and all forms of extremism.

I conclude by joining the vast majority of United Nations Members in stressing once again the urgent need to reform the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions and other international financial institutions. Their structures and decision making processes reflect a balance of power that is 60 years old, serving the interests of a privileged few and ignoring the large majority. The new millennium, with its large number of independent sovereign States and globalization, has ushered in a new world order. Today, we speak boldly of justice, equality, democracy, freedom, human rights, environment and the adverse impact of climate change, among other things. These are the priorities of our time, which we must acknowledge in place of the bitter experiences of the past. The new world order of nations has to be based on justice, mutual respect and sovereign equality if we are to evolve towards the world of peace and hope that we wish to leave to our future generations.

May Bangladesh live forever! Long live the United Nations!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. Roman-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingom of Thailand.

Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Shinawatra (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand, allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly upon his election to preside over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

I would also like to convey our appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his outstanding leadership of the General Assembly during the previous session.

We continue to live in challenging times. Much still needs to be done to restore stability and confidence in the global financial and economic system, and to find long-term solutions to the eurozone crisis. The Arab Spring has taught us that it is very important to listen to the voice of the people. The risk of conflict in various regions around the globe may affect our efforts to promote peace, prosperity and democracy.

We have also seen how religious insensitivity and hate can lead to violence. In the light of this, we need to promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, both in and among societies. These are essential factors to prevent conflict and promote lasting peace.

In our efforts to promote lasting peace and security, we are confronted with a wide range of threats, both old and new. It is therefore necessary for us to seek innovative solutions and new thinking. We need strong leadership, political will and good global governance. It is imperative that we settle international disputes by peaceful means. But even beyond that, we need to think in terms of preventive and preemptive actions to prevent such disputes from arising in the first place. Most important, we have to think in terms of promoting inclusive and comprehensive peace and development, both within and among countries. Peace, security and development are all interconnected.

Economic development must go hand in hand with political advancement. Here, I would like to emphasize three points. First, an inclusive national development strategy is vital. During this period of economic uncertainty, we must not consider economic growth alone. It is important to put people front and centre in the development agenda. Sustainable growth and development, job creation, promoting poverty reduction and equality and addressing climate change must go hand in hand. That is what every Government should do — put people at the heart of the country's economic development strategy — because we believe that the greatest asset of any country is the people, and how much a country can excel depends on how much its people can fully realize their potential.

Secondly, an inclusive regional development is the way forward and would help strengthen the fabric of regional peace and security. Thailand strongly believes that we and our neighbours in the region have a shared objective. We have a shared interest in fostering common peace and prosperity. We need to therefore strive to prosper together because only by working together can we create a much-needed synergy that would support our common development. That will also help limit the chance of conflict.

In South-East Asia, that is the spirit that drives the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish an ASEAN Community by the year 2015. As ASEAN moves towards greater integration, great efforts are being made to close development gaps and expand connectivity across South-East Asia and beyond to the wider East Asia and South Asia. That would help spread development and growth more broadly across the continent. And as economic activities become more concentrated in East Asia, that closer integration and expanded connectivity, together with an expanding region-wide network of free trade agreements, will further strengthen the resilience of East Asia, create greater opportunities and unleash the full potential of this promising region.

Thirdly, an inclusive process at the global level is crucial as the international community considers the post-2015 development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been an important tool that resulted in better livelihoods for millions of people. With 2015 fast approaching, the international community should mobilize an all-out effort to make the final push in realizing those MDGs.

At the same time, it is important to prepare beyond 2015. The successes and failures of the implementation of the MDGs should be taken into account as the international community starts to frame the post-2015 development agenda or the sustainable development goals. The process towards that end should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda will enjoy the broadest possible support and ownership of the international community. Thailand will play an active and constructive role in that process because development is an issue close to our heart.

In this age of globalization, the concept of absolute security has become obsolete. Peace can never be achieved in isolation. We can only seek peace through common security and stability. We must work closely with our friends in each region to strengthen their capacities in meeting their development goals. We believe that the peace and prosperity of our neighbours is that of our own. That is particularly relevant in the current case of Myanmar during the critical period of transition towards greater democracy, which Thailand fully supports. We must all work together as partners to help Myanmar continue in its process of change. We will all benefit from that economic cooperation and integration.

We live in a world of increasing interconnectivity, but our peoples continue to face insecurity from cross-border challenges. In this age of globalization, the concept of security must be people-centred. Therefore, transnational challenges — from people smuggling to human trafficking, from narcotics to pandemics, from natural disasters to illegal trade in arms and materials for weapons of mass destruction — must rank high on our national agenda. The international community should redouble its collective effort to act forcefully against transnational crimes that exist in a world of increased interconnectivity.

One of the worst forms of human indignity is human trafficking. I consider that inhumane form of exploitation to be a matter of national priority and am fully committed to eliminating it.. Whether it is human trafficking or other transnational crimes, the key is to ensure that the rule of law prevails and the basic rights of peoples are guaranteed. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, in particular deserve our attention.

Solutions to those challenges cannot be achieved by Governments alone. We need to work with all stakeholders, especially in strengthening international norms and standards. Through the United Nations, we need to promote the rule of law as a solid foundation to achieve peace, international security, human rights and sustainable development.

We are committed to promoting peace and prosperity within countries and internationally, but, ultimately, the process must begin at home. It can best be accomplished by providing space for all within a democratic framework and promoting national reconciliation. Above all else, we must think in terms of partnership and work together as responsible members of the international community.

Working through the United Nations, we need to reach out to people who have been denied their legitimate rights and aspirations. It is in that spirit that the Royal Thai Government established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine on 1 August 2012, in the hope that both Israel and Palestine can achieve true and lasting peace based on a two-State solution.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the situation in Syria continues to worsen. Thailand is deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of violence against civilians and strongly condemns such violence. We call for an immediate end to the use of force against civilians. We call for all sides to engage in dialogue towards a political solution, which can be achieved only by the efforts of the Syrian people themselves.

In the quest for peace and security, we believe it is necessary to continually look beyond our borders. Thailand wishes to reaffirm our commitment to peacekeeping in difficult times as necessary. From Timor-Leste to Haiti to Darfur and in the Gulf of Aden, Thailand's peacekeeping operations also assist in local and community development, sharing our best practices in agriculture, health and water resource management.

In sum, Thailand has continued to engage with the international community across all three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. The management of those interconnected issues will provide us with long-term solutions, not only for conflict resolution via peaceful means, but also for ways to prevent conflicts from arising altogether.

I assure the Assembly that Thailand will continue to be a strong partner of the United Nations in helping to address those shared challenges of humankind. It is with that conviction that we have submitted our candidature as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2017-2018.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Lilo (Solomon Islands): I wish to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I also commend his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, for his fine leadership during the last session. In addition, I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing security, development and human rights, the three pillars of the United Nations Charter.

Global security remains a serious challenge today. States are increasing their military capabilities and arms sales have tripled in the last year and are reaching record levels. Closer to home, in the Asia-Pacific region, new Cold War lines are being drawn and low-intensity territorial disputes are brewing. That situation provides the option of unilateral action, which undermines the rule of law at the international level. Those challenges now demand an effective multilateral institution that responds meaningfully in real time to uphold the rule of law. In that regard, Solomon Islands welcomes this year's theme on adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means. It is our desire that States that find themselves in international disputes adhere to the rule of law and work towards ensuring global peace.

Solomon Islands emerged from an internal conflict some 10 years ago. A regional peace initiative known as the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has helped restore law and order and created an environment for nation-building and development. Our gratitude goes out to all our regional neighbours.

A national truth and reconciliation commission that was set up in 2009 to investigate the causes of the conflict

submitted its report early this year. The Commission has facilitated the national reconciliation and healing process, and the Government has established a working group to carefully consider the recommendations in the report.

Solomon Islands commends the General Assembly for convening the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels this week. The rule of law is fundamental in guiding the conduct of actors and addressing the realities within national and international jurisdictions.

Since regaining peace and stability, Solomon Islands has achieved some social and economic progress. For example, economically, the country has enjoyed steady growth in the last five years. External reserves continue to improve and, as of February 2012, they stand at 10 months import cover. In addition, Solomon Islands is one of the 11 countries identified by the World Bank in 2012 as having most improved the ease of doing business in the country across several areas of regulation. An economic core working group has also been established to coordinate donor assistance and is playing an important role in public finance reforms, including debt management, and in creating fiscal buffers that enable us to cushion external shocks.

In the health sector, I am pleased to report that we have almost eradicated malaria from two of our nine provinces. Infant mortality has significantly decreased from 80 to 35 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate has also decreased from 500 to 200 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Government and its development partners continue to fund medical and health centres to deliver the services needed by our people.

Major improvements in the law and order situation have resulted in the reduction of major crimes and created a safer environment in the country. We have also successfully hosted a number of international events, such as the Oceania football tournament of the International Federation of Association Football, the Festival of Pacific Arts and recently the visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. We have regained our image of the country known as the happy isles in the Pacific.

As part of our efforts to address governance issues, Solomon Islands has intensified its national consultations to determine the appropriate mechanisms to improve political integrity and stability. National consultations have been conducted to obtain feedback from the community on the required institutions and processes. Strengthening governance is expensive and needs international partnership. I take this opportunity to thank the Department of Political Affairs for its assistance towards our electoral reforms.

After almost 10 years, RAMSI is now in its transitional phase. The Government is working closely with the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands to ensure a smooth transition as the responsibility for security and development is placed back in the hands of the Government and community. My Government will engage with various stakeholders, including United Nations bodies, to consolidate the gains that have been made so far and in building a resilient State.

Solomon Islands continues to strengthen its relationship with the United Nations. This year we opened a second diplomatic Permanent Mission in Geneva. We are also pleased to see that the World Health Organization office in Honiara has been upgraded from a liaison office to the level of resident representative. We request the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to follow suit. I believe a stronger United Nations presence at the country level will further enhance understanding of the country's development priorities and challenges. The United Nations will only be strengthened with a secretariat that represents the diversity of its membership.

Solomon Islands recognizes the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Fiji.

We will continue to dialogue with Fiji and call on the region and the international community to support Fiji's "Engaging with the Pacific" process and its road map to the 2014 general elections. We welcome Fiji's commitment to hold its general elections in 2014.

Solomon Islands has also strengthened its mediating role at the subregional level through the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The MSG is made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste. Within the MSG secretariat, a peacekeeping unit has been established. However, Solomon Islands and the other MSG members believe that the United Nations remains the bedrock of international peace and security.

The promotion of human rights is fundamental to creating a culture of peace and security. Solomon Islands welcomes the ongoing intergovernmental process to strengthen the effectiveness of human rights

treaty institutions during this session. We recognize the universality of human rights and call for the elimination of double standards and the politicization of human rights violations.

On the situation in the Middle East, I believe the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide a comprehensive solution to the region's complex issues, including the current situation in Syria. It is a region that deserves freedom, democracy and long-term security. Solomon Islands continues to support the work of the Quartet and the good offices of the Secretary-General in defusing tensions and advancing political discussion on a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine.

There is no justification for the killing of innocent civilians, wherever it may occur. We therefore join the international community in expressing our deep concern about the sad events in Benghazi.

With respect to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific, Solomon Islands supports New Caledonia's aspirations to self-determination. I wish to inform the Assembly that, last month, members of the MSG undertook a second ministerial visit to the territory to monitor progress under the Noumea Accord. We encourage all efforts to enable the Kanaks to assume leadership in determining their future. Solomon Islands also joins its regional neighbours in supporting the reinscription of French Polynesia in the list of countries to be decolonized. We also support other peoples within the Asia-Pacific region that aspire for self-determination and independence.

I welcome the work done by the General Assembly on strengthening the smooth transition process for countries graduating from the group of least developed countries. In working towards graduating from the group, we are embarking on a number of development initiatives. Under the Istanbul Programme of Action, Solomon Islands is pursuing three high-value national investments. First, with support from New Zealand, a second international airport is being constructed in the western part of our country. Secondly, the submarine fibre-optic cable project is expected to go on line by 2014. Thirdly, Solomon Islands is in the process of establishing two tertiary universities, the Solomon Islands National University and the University of South Pacific Solomon Islands Campus.

Those national projects place Solomon Islands on a path to transforming its economy and ensuring that inclusive and equitable economic growth takes root in the country. We have done this by unlocking domestic and regional resources through the establishment of a debt strategy in partnership with the private sector and the Asian Development Bank.

Furthermore, we are taking steps to maximize returns from our natural resources. As a party to the Nauru Agreement, we have closed off pockets of high seas between our exclusive economic zones in a bid to protect and manage fish stocks. In that regard, we have adopted the Vessel Day Scheme to guarantee an equitable share of benefits. We hold the position that the Scheme must be embodied in bilateral and multilateral fisheries agreements. We call on all distant-water fishing nations to respect that principled position.

In the mining sector, we are now a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and we continue to develop policy and translate it into local laws and regulations. Mining presents a major opportunity to broaden our economic base. In that regard, we will be granting mining leases to a major nickel-mining company before the end of the year. It is estimated that the company will produce around 69,000 tons per year and generate significant job opportunities.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), we charted a new course to develop an improved paradigm for advancing and measuring the three pillars of sustainable development. The full and timely implementation of the Rio+20 outcome (resolution 66/288, annex) is crucial. As we approach 2015, we must accelerate efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets in the remaining three years.

Solomon Islands is implementing its national development strategy for the period 2011-2020. We call on our development partners to align their assistance with the priorities that are contained in our national development strategy. The proposed post-2015 development agenda must take into account any shortcomings in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and the sustainable development goals must be viable economically, community-based and time-bound. We look forward to working with the experts who will be establishing the framework. Solomon Islands is pleased to be one of the 50 countries that UNDP will consult in developing the post-2015 global development agenda. We request that this consultation process also mainstream issues of concern to small island developing States into the agenda

of the 2014 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

I join my colleagues in the Alliance of Small Island States in reiterating that climate change is an urgent and irreversible threat to humanity. Solomon Islands is deeply troubled by the current low ambition level of the pledges by developed countries. There is a discrepancy between what has been pledged and what is necessary to stabilize temperature decrease. That means mitigation must be prioritized at the eighteenth ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Doha and greenhouse-gas emission levels meaningfully decreased. We need to have certainty that we are working towards a temperature increase of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and not 3 to 5 degrees Celsius, in order to ensure the survival, viability and sustainable development of small island developing States and least developed countries.

We deeply regret that some countries have opted out of the Kyoto Protocol, some have refused to take a second commitment and others have remained undecided on taking a second commitment.

However, at the national level I am pleased to announce that, in June, Solomon Islands launched its national climate change policy, which mainstreams climate change into all sectors of the country. Solomon Islands is a country with rich biological and cultural diversity. It is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative on coral reefs, fisheries and food security. This year, 22 Pacific Island countries and territories came together in Solomon Islands to showcase their cultural diversity and heritage. The region has indigenous biological and cultural diversity, which makes it an indigenous and biocultural hot spot. That hot spot remains fragile and exposed to threats and needs international support. We will be seeking ways and means of having that initiative featured on the global agenda.

The reform of the Security Council must keep pace with the changing global realities. We support the call to make the Security Council more representative, relevant and effective. After four sessions, we are concerned about the slow progress of negotiations and hope to see progress during this session.

My Government recognizes Taiwan's flexible, moderate and rational foreign policy, which continues to promote friendly cross-Strait relations. Solomon Islands continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the United Nations system, including its aspiration to be a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Although not a member of ICAO, Taiwan manages more than 1 million flights and 40 million passengers per annum. Similarly, Taiwan is the twenty-second-largest emitter of greenhouse gas, but it is not a member of UNFCCC. I firmly believe that it is our shared responsibility to engage Taiwan in our efforts to advance sustainable development and address climate change.

With regard to Cuba, I thank the Government and people of Cuba for the support they have provided to the medical students of Solomon Islands. We join the international community in calling for the immediate lifting of the United States economic and trade embargo against Cuba. Solomon Islands encourages the United States to respect the principle of good-neighbourliness.

Finally, with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, I would like to thank Member States for their confidence in electing Solomon Islands to the Executive Board of UN-Women. I also welcome the call by the Secretary-General to convene the World Conference on Women in 2015. Solomon Islands further acknowledges the $320 million in regional assistance from Australia to support gender programmes for Pacific island countries. Women play a very important role as peacemakers and leaders in Solomon Islands society. Our gender challenge has grown with time. Today we have national gender programmes that support empowerment. We look forward to working closely with Australia and the other Board members in advancing the cause of women and girls.

Solomon Islands is committed to working closely with the President in establishing an inclusive, transparent and effective multilateral system. I would also like to assure him of our support for our common endeavour to build a peaceful and secure world for our children and future generations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Jeenbekov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, let me congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, I wish him every success in carrying out his important functions. It is also a great pleasure to express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his successful, fruitful leadership of the work of the Assembly's previous session.

It would be difficult to say that the overall situation in the world has improved. We have not yet fully recovered from one of the most serious global economic crises in the past 65 years. Yes, the overall economic situation is gradually normalizing. Proof of that is the improving forecasts for world economic growth by key international organizations for this year. However, we should point out that risks remain and that the recovery process is still very uncertain.

It is unfortunate that the world has not become any safer. We are seeing a rise in confrontations and tension in various parts of the world. Global climate change, population growth against the background of a deteriorating environment, the scarcity of natural resources and of access to drinking water, and many other problems are in the aggregate stoking tensions and the potential for conflict in areas of cooperation on the international arena.

Traditional ways of life are changing fast under the impact of globalization processes. States are finding it increasingly hard to tackle modern challenges by themselves because of the transborder nature of those challenges. Terrorism, separatism, extremism, drugs, information wars — these are a kind of tumour for humankind and cannot be eradicated at the local level alone.

Sadly, there are forces at work in the world that wish to drag humankind to the brink of the precipice, to kindle the flames of hostility wherever they go. One glaring example is the video *Innocence of Muslims*, which symbolically appeared on the eve of the General Assembly session. Kyrgyzstan condemns the provocative nature of its content. It is unacceptable to insult anyone's religious sensibilities, regardless of their faith. Humanism, tolerance and mutual respect make the world better and safer. Therefore, we also reject the use of force against diplomats — envoys of peace and a symbol of cooperation — of any country.

Humankind is developing and changing fast. Regional, and even local, events can impact on global processes. In 2011, we observed with sympathy and solidarity the events in the Middle East and North Africa. The situation in Syria that we have seen this year can only be a cause of serious concern for the international community. All attempts to resolve the military conflict and restore stability to that county have, sadly, failed. With regard to the thousands of civilian victims, the Kyrgyz Republic strongly advocates a speedy end to the violence in that country, the opening of a broad national dialogue between the political forces and a continuation of political and socioeconomic reform and participation of all Syrian citizens.

The Afghan factor continues to be a source of threat to international security. There are concerns that a full, swift drawdown of coalition forces could open the way for destructive forces and the emergence of various extremist and terrorist groups in neighbouring countries. Every stakeholder in the world can make a contribution to the issue of security by reviving Afghanistan's economy and developing trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian ties with the country, as well as its communication infrastructure.

Since 2001 Kyrgyzstan has played its part in that process, rendering assistance to the counter-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan through the cargo Transit Center at Manas International Airport. It is clear that the counter-terrorist coalition, with the withdrawal of the military contingent from Afghanistan, must bring its mission to a logical conclusion to create the foundation of a national administrative system for that country so that all branches of power can be fully functional throughout the territory of Afghanistan.

We must do our utmost for the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan by engaging it in the

development of regional cooperation and implementing joint socioeconomic projects between international organizations and financial institutions. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan is ready to expand trade and economic ties to export electricity to Afghanistan as part of the CASA-1000 project, with the support of donor countries and the international financial institutions.

The peaceful development of Afghanistan is impossible without eradicating the systemic, ubiquitous cultivation of opium in that country. For many years Afghanistan has been the biggest producer and exporter of drugs. The growing penetration of that deadly crop is harming the countries of Central Asia. Not only are they on the northern transit route towards the countries of Europe and Asia, they are also progressively becoming consumers.

Drugs are the enemy of civilized humankind. Where there are drugs, there are international organized crime groups and transborder challenges. Easy money earned at the cost of people's lives has no productive basis. It brings destruction and the degradation of human value. Drugs also spawn corruption and erode State systems from the inside. Criminal proceeds are used to bribe law enforcement bodies and the judiciary. They fund corrupt politicians who seek power. The international community must provide technical, economic and other support to Afghanistan's neighbours, including the Central Asian countries, to build an effective shield to neutralize and localize drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

We believe that the mission of the United Nations, as the single universal multilateral Organization, is to be on the front line in tackling all modern challenges and issues.

We should recognize that the global prevention architecture, the international and regional security system of today, does not reflect the requirements of our time. It is unfortunate that despite the search for universal methods for mediation and peaceful conflict resolution, the international community still has not resolved those issues.

The need to reform the United Nations architecture and adapt it to the realities of the modern international situation has not abated. A top priority is the reform of principal organs of the United Nations, namely, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We should point out that the tasks of those structures, in the light of the current international situation, require serious transformation and integration of fundamentally new approaches.

In terms of the reform of the United Nations, we propose the expansion of the membership of the Security Council to make it more representative, transparent and democratic. The reform should be based on principles of universality, efficiency and broad geographic representation, particularly for those countries that have not yet had the chance to take part in its work as non-permanent members.

At the same time, we need to strengthen the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council as a global governance mechanism on issues of sustainable development, food security, humanitarian assistance, environmental cooperation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the 2015 deadline.

The current global situation dictates the need to consolidate the efforts of all countries to develop tangible action based on objective, fair reflection of their interests and needs. On that basis, the Kyrgyz Republic has submitted its candidature for the Economic and Social Council for the period 2013-2015. If elected by Member States to that organ with such enormous potential, the Kyrgyz Republic intends to play its part in tackling problems on the global agenda.

The problems of sustainable development and global climate change have presented serious challenges in recent years, and the attention of the international community must not slacken. In supporting the global discussions on a green economy model that took place at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, Kyrgyzstan chose its future path towards long-term sustainable green development and an environment-minded economy. We would like to confirm our commitment to developing our economy through complying with requirements to protect our environment and with a safe approach to national resources, which are a national asset.

At Rio+20, the importance of development issues concerning mountainous areas was acknowledged with regard to managing global natural resources, as was the need for support for the sustainable development of mountain regions in developing countries. It should be noted that despite the assistance of the international financial institutions, developing mountain States continue to suffer difficulties. High levels of poverty and isolation, increasing transport costs and large

foreign debts comprise the main problems facing mountain countries. In that situation, it will be difficult to achieve the MDGs and attain the status set out in the United Nations documents on sustainable development.

In that respect, I wish to call attention to the importance of the launching of international discussions on the question of exchanging Kyrgyzstan's foreign debt for sustainable development projects. We call on the United Nations and its entities to render support on that matter.

By the will of God, we gained independence 21 years ago. Previous leaders were unable to cope with the task of building a truly independent Kyrgyzstan. They could not build an effective, transparent State system for governing that would work for the benefit of the people. Most of the important issues were tackled behind closed doors, without informing society. For the sake of personal enrichment and gain, some State decisions were even taken to the detriment of national interests.

The former Kyrgyz leaders declared a course for democracy that in fact did not take place. The former regimes established a clan-like system of governance that flouted the principles of a free society and usurped power. They not only attempted to hand power down to their children, but brought the people to their knees merely for the sake of their personal enrichment. The freedom-loving people of Kyrgyzstan therefore carried out two revolutions, in 2005 and 2010, in response to the unjust, tyrannical and authoritarian power.

The latest choice has proved a difficult one for our people, despite our commitment to democratic values, which is almost hard-wired in the Kyrgyz people, part of their very heritage. Over 100 glorious sons of our country laid down their lives for democracy during the April revolution of 2010. Their memory lives on. Also, 1,500 people were injured.

Over the past two years, our country has begun to implement new, democratic governance. The Kyrgyz people have chosen a parliamentary, presidential form of governance. We believe that was a just decision. According to impartial observers, our country has made significant progress during the past year in terms of building a democratic State.

We began under difficult conditions. In the years of independence in Kyrgyzstan, industry virtually ground to a halt. No new jobs were created. Labour migration grew. One third of the working population was forced to find employment abroad. We were left with ineffective public administration institutions, low per-capita income, a reduced budget, rampant corruption and organized crime, as well as unhampered drug-trafficking from Afghanistan to the north, east and west.

Currently, we are waging an uncompromising struggle against the corruption that is wearing away the State system from within. Civil servants who are found to be involved in corruption are being prosecuted under the law. In modern Kyrgyzstan, there will be no caste of those whom the law does not touch.

The battle against corruption is already seeing tangible results. Senior State officials under investigation have been arrested, including members of Parliament, ministers, their deputies and others. Leaders of organized crime groups are either in prison or on the run outside of the country.

We are determined to extradite for prosecution those people for whom international warrants have been issued. In the name of fairness, the former leaders of Kyrgyzstan, who have taken shelter in neighbouring countries along with their inner circle, must be sanctioned in strict compliance with Kyrgyz legislation. Kyrgyzstan stresses that they are being prosecuted not for politically motivated acts, but for specific crimes punishable by law. They gave the orders to open fire on peaceful civilians and to destroy innocent people. They pillaged their own people and the country's budget and took enormous financial assets out of the country. They have used criminal gains to buy villas, land and other costly material goods. In such issues, punishment must be just and inevitable so as to deter future leaders from repeating such actions.

Therefore, we still hope that the Byelorussian authorities, partners of ours in the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union and who have assumed responsibilities under the Minsk and Kishinev Conventions, will show their commitment to their international legal obligations and extradite the relatives and the retinue of the former President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who have been hiding in their territory and even have Byelorussian passports. The United Nations needs to establish clear standards and procedures to ensure justice at the international level, and especially for the return of illegally gained assets.

Kyrgyzstan is steadfastly building a parliamentary democracy, a direct authority that represents the people, their wishes and their needs. At present, there are processes in place that are gradually bringing our society to a healthy state. Today, Parliament is engaged in political processes. Gradually, polemics and arguments are transitioning from street democracy to a civilized form for resolving any significant controversial issues within the walls of Parliament. Under the national Constitution, the Kyrgyz Parliament is the highest representative body, carrying out the functions of legislative authority and control. The Government is fully accountable to the Parliament.

A major test, and at the same time an indicator, is the fact that since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2011, we have seen the peaceful launch of all institutions of authority in accordance with the letter of the law. The members of Parliament have been elected. At the end of 2011 we saw, for the first time in Kyrgyzstan's history, a peaceful transfer of power from the President to the newly elected Head of State, Almazbek Atambayev. A functioning coalition Government is in place.

We are reforming the judicial system, which must be equitable and fully independent. Despite strong opposition from certain quarters who are not interested in seeing the successful conclusion of that issue, we have, in the space of two years, launched a new, transparent mechanism for the selection of judges. In mid-September, the Parliament approved the 25 judges of the Supreme Court. The selection of judges to the Constitutional Court and local courts is also under way.

The establishment of an independent judiciary is extremely important for us. It will allow us to achieve a just public administration in which every citizen will be equal before the law. We are working effectively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other agencies on the legal system and on improving legislation to ensure everyone's equality before the law.

With the participation of the Parliament, the country has undertaken planning and reforms in all spheres of the State system — in the justice system, law enforcement, taxation, oversight and others. All of that requires stronger legislation. Kyrgyzstan is taking its first steps in the new format of a parliamentary republic. Sustainable development depends on the level of governance, on the rule of law and on human rights. We believe in the bright future of our country and that very soon all our countrymen will be able to say with pride that they are the citizens of a strong, prosperous Kyrgyzstan.

(*spoke in Kyrgyz; interpretation provided by the delegation*)

One can more clearly see the sanctity of our fatherland and our true values of independence from afar.

I would like to appeal to my countrymen from the highest podium in the world. Twenty years ago, God granted us the independence that our ancestors had dreamed of for centuries, for which they had shed their blood and sacrificed their lives. The freedom that was sent down to our people as a blessing should be strengthened without division, by tireless effort and labour united in harmony. Regardless of provocation by two-faced forces, we need to continue to strengthen the path on which we set forth. Let us build a strong, united beloved Kyrgyzstan. To reach a bright future we need to continue to move forward. Life is a struggle between light and dark, good and bad. We need unity. We need work and welfare, not animosity and discord. May the Creator bless our nation as it moves towards bright goals.

(*spoke in Russian*)

Unfortunately, our country is still weak and economically dependent. We are not free in the choice of our foreign sources of energy, but that problem is gradually being tackled with the assistance of our strategic partners. Kyrgyzstan needs the help of the international community to tackle the problem of our foreign debt, which is hampering the process of economic growth of the State and the implementation of fundamental reforms.

We fully share what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said here in his opening statement at the Assembly's sixty-seventh session, namely, that developing States need support (see A/67/PV.1). We believe that developing democracies in particular need support from countries of the democratic club and from economically developed States. To consolidate parliamentary democracy, Kyrgyzstan vitally needs the support of our principal partners for the complex reforms undertaken in restructuring or in writing off of Kyrgyzstan's State debt. I wish to stress that we have a clear vision of how to conduct reforms and how to achieve development of the State. However, in the light of the high deficit, we need significant additional resources, which we will certainly return once we have

achieved development and prosperity in the country in the coming years.

We are open to mutually beneficial, trusting partnerships and cooperation with all States. Kyrgyzstan has great economic potential. We are an open country, willing to engage in mutual dialogue. We have great industrial and metallurgical potential. In Kyrgyzstan you can find most of the elements on Mendeleev's table of elements.

Critically important for many energy projects, we have a highly qualified labour force and cheap electricity. In the modern world, energy is the driver of progress. Kyrgyzstan has huge hydroelectric potential, which we have begun to exploit. Every year we develop around 14 billion kilowatts per hour of electricity, which is not enough to satisfy the hydro-energy demand of Kyrgyzstan, which is around 142.5 billion kilowatts per hour.

On 20 September, Kyrgyzstan and Russia concluded an agreement that is vital for the entire Central Asian region on building and operationalizing the Kambar-Ata and the Naryn Cascade power plants. Participation in building one of the biggest hydroelectric projects in Central Asia will include our neighbours in the region and allow Kyrgyzstan not only to increase the development of cost-effective, environmentally clean electricity but also to preserve the water in the foothills that is currently supplying our neighbours during the growing season. The benefit of the effective implementation of such projects is clear. It will enhance our hydroelectric export potential and protect drinking water for our neighbours. We invite all investors to take part in building those projects.

To conclude, I would like to note that the international community is undergoing a difficult period. Political and social upheavals are creating numerous obstacles on the path to human development. We are seeing a new era for the world order, combined with new historical challenges and changes. At this critical stage the Organization must continue its lofty mission to build peace and to achieve sustainable development throughout the world. Kyrgyzstan, in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation with the United Nations, is prepared to play its part in tackling the major challenges of this day.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum

Address by Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ali (Somalia): I would like to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to commend Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for the manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly last year.

Just over two weeks ago, Somalia took a bold and decisive step away from decades of division, disorder and conflict, and instead towards the reconstitution of a more representative, more democratic Somali Republic, at peace with itself, with its neighbours and with the rest of the world. On 1 August this year, a National Constituent Assembly adopted the new Somali Constitution and on 20 August a new Parliament was sworn in, which elected our new President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on 10 September. In the coming weeks, the President will appoint a Prime Minister and a new cabinet will be duly established.

Let me take this opportunity to convey the sincere regrets of President Mohamud. He would have liked to be here himself to address the Assembly on this great occasion. However, the tremendous scale and urgency of the challenges facing him as leader of Somalia and the demands of his new role did not permit him to travel here to New York to present his remarks in person. He

asked me to come here to convey his warm greetings and his vision for Somalia's future.

For more than two decades of crisis, the Somali people have suffered and endured, but we have not done so alone. The United Nations has stood by us, providing humanitarian assistance to those of our people in need, helping us to rebuild from the ruins of war, bringing us time and again to the negotiating table to resolve our differences and maintaining the dignity of the Somali nation by keeping our flag flying throughout these long, dark years. As we emerge from the long, dark days, I wish to express my personal thanks, and those of the Somali people, to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Augustine Mahiga, for their tireless support and crucial role in helping to open this new chapter in Somali history.

Somalia's progress is also due in great measure to the selfless courage and sacrifice of our brothers and sisters in the African Union, including our closest neighbours, whose forces have fought long and hard, with so many laying down their lives in the battle to give our children a better future. With the support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and other partners, our armed forces are becoming increasingly experienced and capable, but we will need AMISOM's steadfast presence and mentoring for some time to come, and we call upon our brothers in the African Union to renew their commitment as we move forward to assume our own responsibilities in full. We thank our international partners who are diligently supporting AMISOM, especially the European Union and the United States, among others.

The members of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have also extended the hand of friendship to the Somali people during these difficult times. We are especially grateful to the Government and people of Turkey for their faith, courage and leadership in ending our long isolation and building bridges between Somalia and the rest of the world.

But now, with all these partners standing by us we must increasingly learn to travel our own path with our own energies, developing the ability to stand on our own feet and step free from reliance on our kind friends. Already, the Somali diaspora from around the world are returning to the country with investment and skills that will build the future Somalia. We can also learn from how peace and growing prosperity have developed in other parts of the country. We must build on the return of normality in Mogadishu, and elsewhere in Somalia, and on the growing public confidence in the future. It is the Somali people in the villages and the nomadic pastoralists, with their resilience, drive and dynamism, who are best placed to lend real stability to Somalia's future.

The end of Somalia's transition was brought about by the tremendous joint efforts of the Transitional Federal Government, Somali regional administrations, civil society and our traditional elders. Against all odds, within one year Somalis were able to adopt a new provisional Constitution, create a new Parliament and elect a new President, heralding the beginning of a new era. This one-year experience has shown several things. When we put our minds to it, we Somalis are capable of overcoming tremendous obstacles and delivering on expectations. It has shown that we can effect our political transitions within our own country. It has shown that Somalis are indeed ready for a new chapter and are calling for a permanent Government that can build on the foundations of this remarkable year.

Somalia's transition has officially ended, but the work of rebuilding our nation continues. The new administration has four short years to translate agreements and objectives made on paper into concrete, tangible progress for our people, and to place Somalia firmly on an irreversible path to enduring peace and growing prosperity.

The most urgent challenge is to restore peace and security throughout Somali territory. Our forces, together with our African Union allies, are making great progress in that regard. But a stable peace cannot be achieved through military means alone. We must practise the politics of inclusion, establishing a credible, representative, inclusive and capable Government — a Government by the people, for the people, not a Government of the few, serving the interests of the few. Initially, that Government must be about delivering real governance and connections with the people. It must be about the process of building local representation, addressing community justice and seeking to build basic services, rather than about distant institutions of Government from Mogadishu, or even provincial centres. Power and responsibility must be devolved as close to the people as possible, in accordance with the principles of federalism. It will be important to recognize the existence of other Somali authorities, as well as de facto political and military

forces across the country, with which we will work to establish a vibrant, prosperous and stable representative Government democracy, firmly adhering to and grounded in Somali and Islamic values.

We will also require a fair and independent judiciary, one resistant to executive interference, and one that will meet the needs and earn the trust of ordinary citizens, while bringing an end to the culture of impunity that has gripped our nation for the past two decades.

We have repeatedly extended an olive branch to the Government's adversaries, and, although this has been repeatedly rejected, our new President will continue to reach out and offer peace. Al-Shabaab is a complex and heterogeneous movement. Most of its members are ordinary citizens who have aligned themselves with Al-Shabaab out of fear or a sense of grievance. At the same time we must also be honest with ourselves and admit that some of the members come from a nationalist, conservative faction of our fractured country, which has been disillusioned and damaged by decades of conflict, and they have sought refuge in an extreme and harsh source of justice and security. To them we must prove that there is a better way. To them we have always said and will continue to say, "Brothers and sisters, lay down your arms and let us talk".

We Somalis have a saying — after every war comes peace. So let us remember that we have no choice as a nation but to live together. Let us settle our differences through dialogue and compromise, so that there is no longer any justification for any Somali to take up arms against another. To those few ideological extremists in Al-Shabaab's ranks who remain committed to the use of terror and the murder of innocents to achieve their aims, we say, "There is no place in Somali society, nor in international society, for you and your violent creed. We will fight you until Somalia is once again a nation founded on the peace, tolerance and management that constitute the true spirit of the great religion of Islam".

As we focus our energies on these immediate challenges, we must nevertheless keep our longer-term goals clearly in view. The new Government understands clearly that its purpose is not to entrench itself indefinitely in power, but to lay the foundation for a democratic system of governance, anchored in Islamic values and based on universal, competitive elections, by August 2016.

The new Government has just four short years within which to establish the states and regions of this federation, and to do so in a way that unifies our people rather than dividing them. We must validate the new Constitution through consultation and referendum, and establish systems of governance that serve the interests of the Somali people. We must design representative electoral systems that serve to heal the divisions of our society rather than to aggravate them.

As we move away from transitional Government into the era of permanent Government, we must establish a new compact for national coexistence in which the aspirations of all Somalis, not only some, are reflected. We recognize that the bonds of love and solidarity that bound us together in 1960 have been heavily damaged and sorely tested. The talks initiated earlier this year between the Transitional Federal Government and the Somaliland administration have begun well, and we intend to continue them. We will not use military or political coercion to bring out an artificial unity; we want a genuine unity that results from negotiations, mutual respect and mutual agreement.

The durability of our stabilization efforts will depend in large part upon our ability to revive and develop the Somali economy. Security and durable peace cannot exist without jobs and food, and therefore we must work hard to ensure that food is on the table of the average Somali family, to create job opportunities and to enable Somalis to work for themselves.

Our country is abundant in resources; we have the longest coastline in Africa, 9 million acres of fertile land, the highest per capita number of livestock in the world. We have oil and minerals. We are strategically located at the gateway of the Middle East and Africa, at the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Our challenge as Somalis is to use those resources to bring our country and our people back onto the global economic playing field.

On the topic of resources, we are committed to strengthening the Government's financial accountability. Somalia is a poor country, and we cannot afford corruption. We seek the assistance of our international partners in establishing and strengthening transparent systems of public financial management.

The problems of Somalia have spilled far beyond our borders. Foreign countries have taken in hundreds of thousands of Somalis fleeing the crisis in our country, at considerable sacrifice to their own citizens; Somali pirates have become the scourge of shipping far from our shores. Extremists from across the world have used

our territory as a base from which to plan and launch attacks against foreign countries.

As Somalia reclaims its status as a full member of the international community, we must acknowledge our responsibility as a nation, both for the proliferation of these problems and for their eventual resolution. We recognize the urgency of tackling these threats to international security, but we are also conscious of their complexity and of the fact that lasting solutions can be achieved only through reflection, consultation, the force of law and only, as a last resort, the judicious use of force. We intend to engage with our international partners on all of these fronts, as we strengthen our internal capacity to address these challenges.

The road ahead is long, but we, the Somali people, are committed, and we are ready. We have created the guideposts, and we have chosen a new leadership to help us move forward. We are grateful for the support of the world community; we would not be here today without its moral, political and financial support. Most dear to us is the personal sacrifice made by our African brothers and sisters who came in person to help us protect our country and people. We cannot thank them enough, and we hope one day to be able to repay them.

As many today have noted, the United Nations was founded on the conviction that the nations of the world could come together in the spirit of cooperation to tackle their common problems for the sake of the whole of humanity.

The world is going through a challenging period — economic crises, religious tensions and resource disputes. Every nation has its own challenges and priorities. And yet we come together as the United Nations to forge a common way forward, because we recognize that this small Earth is all the space we have, and we must find a way to share it and coexist peacefully.

As Somalis, we have learned this hard lesson through bitter experience, and we are living through it every day, each time another young man chooses to take his own life and the lives of others; each time a young mother has to bury a child. Let us not forget that in rebuilding a nation, or in steering the world to a better place, we are dealing with the lives of human beings, each life as precious as the next. For the future of our children, we must work harder to make our world peaceful and prosperous.

In that context, on behalf of the Somali people, I want to convey our condolences to the United States and Algeria on the recent violent loss of their senior diplomats. Diplomacy is a peaceful calling and the foundation of the United Nations, and we must protect diplomats for their important role in promoting dialogue and better understanding across countries and cultures.

The members of the Assembly are not strangers to conflict and war. Many countries have experienced violence and destruction equal to or greater than my own. But few other countries in modern times have experienced such a prolonged period of statelessness: a nation without a recognized Government, a valid passport or a convertible currency.

But it is not just the material attributes of statehood that we have missed. To be stateless in this world of States is injurious to a people's identity, to its rights and privileges as a nation, and to its dignity. It is time for us to reclaim Somalia's rightful place in the community of nations, to shoulder our duties and obligations, and to place our country in the service of peace, security and prosperity on this planet we share.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish at the outset to express my sincere gratitude for being given the honour of speaking from this lofty rostrum.

Allow me first of all to convey to the members of the Assembly and to the peoples of their countries the greetings and wishes for peace and prosperity of His Excellency the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

Allow me to congratulate His Excellency Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him every success in his upcoming critical work. I would also like to express appreciation to His Excellency

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for the skilful and effective manner in which he carried out his duties.

Today the international community is witness to complex, multifaceted processes in geopolitics, the global economy and the humanitarian sphere. Serious environmental problems challenge us with their unprecedented urgency. It is no exaggeration to say that major global issues related to energy supplies acquiring universal importance. All of these require a constructive and effective response on the part of the United Nations and the elaboration of appropriate international mechanisms aimed at maximizing the effective use of existing political, financial, organizational and other resources, so as to overcome existing problems and challenges, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and reaffirm the irreversibility of the process of sustainable development of all the peoples of our planet.

Objectively speaking, energy security is fundamental to the stable and conflict-free development of today's world. As a leading energy provider with the fourth-largest reserves of hydrocarbon resources, Turkmenistan legitimately and consistently calls for the establishment of a sound and reliable international energy supply system and the drawing up of plans and projects for cooperation in world energy markets appropriate to modern realities. We believe that it is now time for the United Nations to adopt consensus decisions on universal political and legal mechanisms to govern global energy cooperation.

As members know, at previous General Assembly sessions, the President of Turkmenistan launched a number of initiatives on energy security and mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector. The realities of modern life affirm the relevance of such initiatives. As a step towards those initiatives, Turkmenistan proposes that States Members of the United Nations consider in depth the establishment of an international legal framework to govern the operation of an energy supply system, taking into due account the interests of hydrocarbon producers and transit and recipient nations.

As a first step in that direction, we believe that it would be appropriate to draw up a draft resolution during this session on the establishment of an expert group to develop the relevant United Nations international instrument. At the same time, we look forward to constructive engagement with all States Members of the United Nations, which, we believe, would significantly help to find common approaches to solving one of the most urgent problems of modern development.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June this year, clearly identified the need to strengthen our efforts on ecological issues and environmental protection. Speaking at the meeting, the President of Turkmenistan noted that, at the institutional level, today's main objective is to merge and complement existing global, regional and national instruments.

It is no secret that the Central Asian and Caspian Sea regions have difficult environmental conditions. We think that the efforts made to date to improve the situation are clearly insufficient. We need a joint and results-oriented action plan that combines the use of scientific, technological, political, diplomatic, administrative and technical measures for effective outcomes in that direction. We therefore propose setting up, in cooperation with the United Nations, a regional centre for climate change technologies in Central Asia and the Caspian basin. We believe that such a structure would enable the countries in those regions to significantly strengthen cooperation on ecological safety. It would promote the effective coordination of national, regional and international efforts and would further mutual understanding and confidence-building towards achieving sustainable development goals.

With regard to international politics, Turkmenistan gives particular attention to the issues of peace and security and to ensuring sustainable development. In that context, one of the main challenges facing the international community today is the need for our joint efforts to ensure non-proliferation and disarmament. As a party to the principal international treaties and United Nations conventions in that field, Turkmenistan expects to continue to fully support global disarmament processes.

We believe that it is relevant to pursue the multilateral dialogue on the validity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We propose that a high-level consultative meeting be held next year, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss steps to expand the international non-proliferation legal framework. Turkmenistan's initiative is particularly relevant to the practical implementation of steps towards a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. As we know, the agenda of the sixty-seventh session

includes an item on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Our country is ready to actively cooperate with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and to participate in a number of initiatives in that regard. Given that further improving relevant United Nations agencies may be one practical step in implementing consistent disarmament measures, we think it appropriate to consider the establishment of a United Nations subregional centre for disarmament in Asia.

Strengthening comprehensive, targeted and long-term cooperation with the United Nations is a strategic choice of Turkmenistan and a priority of its foreign policy. As an important part of that cooperation, our country is considering participating in United Nations activities to ensure human development, better living standards and people's well-being; to establish conditions conducive to global economic and social growth; to utilize human creativity; and to promote people's rights and freedoms.

In pursuing those lofty goals and striving to contribute, where possible, to their achievement, Turkmenistan has announced its candidacy for membership of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2013-2015. That decision was made on the basis of the country's current progress in the political, socioeconomic, cultural and other fields, its active role in international processes and its understanding of the responsibilities inherent to membership of the Council. If elected, Turkmenistan plans to use all available means to improve international cooperation for the effective implementation of sustainable development goals. At the same time, Turkmenistan will actively contribute to strengthening the Economic and Social Council by expanding its role in addressing the urgent issue of global socioeconomic development.

The most important element of the modern system of international relations is humanitarian cooperation. To underscore that the humanitarian component is at the centre of the highest principles and values of the community of nations, our country will continue to promote its cooperation with the United Nations on protecting human rights and on establishing conditions conducive to human development. On that basis, given that the United Nations plays a major role in the comprehensive development of humanity and bearing in mind the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we believe it appropriate during this sixty-seventh session to consider including the humanitarian issues on the United Nations international agenda as a separate issue.

In that context, Turkmenistan proposes establishing a United Nations platform of action for humanitarian affairs with a view to it becoming the political and legal basis for the consolidation of the international community's humanitarian efforts. We believe that such a holistic approach will enable us to galvanize the activities of United Nations agencies, to develop long-term solutions in line with international law and General Assembly resolutions, and to ensure the practical implementation of United Nations conventions on humanitarian matters.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our foreign policy, which is based on our love of peace, on neutrality and on broad international cooperation, together with the constructive positions advocated by our country, form a solid basis for Turkmenistan's work in the United Nations. In that spirit, we will rely on broad cooperation with all countries of the world in order to strengthen and develop a comprehensive international partnership.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Avramopoulos (Greece) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the outgoing President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, and to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić of the Republic of Serbia on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at the sixty-seventh session. I also want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who tirelessly carries on at the helm of our Organization in an ever-shifting global environment.

I wish to affirm our endorsement of the positions voiced in the statement made by the observer of the European Union. As always, Greece remains fully committed to the United Nations, to the values of peace, security, and to raising the living standards of people all over the world so that they may lead lives of dignity.

(*spoke in English*)

At the recent High-level Meeting on the rule of law, the States Members of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to one of the most important principles

underlying the international order, which should be our guide in the conduct of diplomacy and international relations. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's opinion that freedom of expression is a fundamental right and privilege belonging to all people, without any discrimination, and should not be abused by anyone in a disgraceful and shameful way.

Unfortunately, there are those who will do everything to provoke, as we have witnessed again recently in the provocative and unacceptable movie which denigrates Islam. Nevertheless, we should strongly condemn all forms of violence, and, in this particular case, the violence against diplomatic missions. There is no justification for it. After all, the measure and limit of every right is the respect of the right of the other.

Greece is dedicated to United Nations efforts to enhance international cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights. We have therefore decided to present our candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term. In this context, we also support the adoption of the European Union Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the appointment of the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights as important steps towards a more coherent European policy and approach to human dignity.

The need to respect and protect human rights and humanitarian law is now as urgent as ever. In fact, illegal migration in the Mediterranean region has given rise to a humanitarian crisis. That is why Greece has introduced major legislative and institutional reforms in the fields of asylum and migration.

I now turn to one of the main pillars of United Nations action: peace and security. Greece's neighbourhood has often been at the centre of serious, interrelated security challenges. My country has consistently played a stabilizing role, which we have accomplished through the pursuit of a policy of peaceful resolution of disputes, within the framework of the United Nations Charter, based on respect for international law and the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Despite the economic and financial crisis, Greece has continued to participate actively in a number of United Nations missions and operations around the world, including in Kosovo and Afghanistan and in the anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia.

Security in the Middle East remains a crucial quest for the countries of the region and the world community. Greece maintains historic ties of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect with its neighbours in North Africa and the Middle East — countries that, following the momentous events of the Arab Spring, are moving towards successful electoral processes and towards building democratic institutions. The European Union should be there, right by their side, as they build their future.

However, we have not seen successful outcomes everywhere. In Syria, demonstrators faced tanks and a brutal crack-down. On numerous occasions we have called on President Al-Assad to open the way for a transitional authority, comprising all sections of Syrian society. Yet, we are still in a prolonged bloody stalemate that jeopardizes the present and the future of the Syrian people, and stability in our region. The result has been no less than 29,000 victims, 250,000 refugees, 2.5 million Syrian citizens in need. We are convinced that a Syrian-led political solution is still achieveable, and we see no alternative to such a solution. Greece believes that there is no military solution to the Syrian problem.

Peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be achieved without a just, lasting and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian issue, on the basis of a two-State solution. We regret the prolonged stagnation in the direct negotiations between the two parties. It is only through negotiations that peace can finally be achieved. We believe that unilateral actions cannot fulfil Israel's quest for security or the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood, which we fully support. The two-State solution should remain feasible on the ground.

I would now like to outline the current position on some salient issues concerning our immediate neighbourhood. The issue of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is, beyond its semantic dimension, an important piece in the puzzle of putting to rest irredentist notions and attempts to rewrite history in our region. I have been informed of what the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said today in the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.12). Distorting reality in front of the entire international community and using nineteenth-century rhetoric in the twenty-first century is counterproductive and will lead us nowhere. Populism and nationalism make up the worst possible mix for the promotion of

anyone's national interests and the stability of our region.

Greece believes that the solution lies in a fair settlement. That would be a name with a geographical qualifier, since Macedonia is a geographical region that overlaps the territories of three countries, the largest part being in Greece, followed by Bulgaria and then the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. And of course the name must be used in relation to everyone; it is an erga omnes obligation, to use the Latin phrase. When we resolve this issue, we will be able to realize the vast potential in our relations, to our mutual benefit, and Greece will be the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's staunchest ally and friend in its efforts to fulfil its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. After all, as is well known, Greece is the most important economic partner of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with a large presence of Greek companies operating there. We also support the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and we welcome the constructive approach to the talks on the part of the Serbian leadership. Dialogue is the only way to resolve problems in Kosovo, while unilateral measures and escalation, especially in the north, should be avoided by all means.

Less than two years from now, Greece's European Union presidency will launch Agenda 2014, which aims to reinvigorate the European perspectives of all our neighbours in the Western Balkans. Elsewhere in our immediate neighbourhood, Greece is consistently pursuing stronger cooperation with Turkey, through a wide range of initiatives, so that we can improve our relations to the benefit of both peoples. Moreover, Greece continues to support Turkey's candidacy for full membership in the European family, on the condition, of course, that all relevant membership criteria are met and that the necessary reforms are carried out. It is of the utmost importance that Turkey gives tangible signs of full respect for international law and abandons attitudes like the standing threat of casus belli against Greece, or its attitude vis-à-vis Cyprus, which undermines efforts to build trust.

That brings us to the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole, where Greece continues to play its role as a force for peace and stability. Greece supports the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to pursue negotiations with the Turkish Cypriot community, under United Nations auspices, aimed ultimately at reuniting the island, according to United Nations resolutions and taking into account the fact that the Republic of Cyprus is a member of the European Union, which currently holds its presidency. However, after 38 years, the division of the island continues and the results of the talks have been disappointing, owing to Turkish-Cypriot intransigence about engaging in constructive talks. We applaud Cyprus's decision to act on its sovereign right to exploit the natural gas deposits in its exclusive economic zone.

We are forging partnerships with other emerging energy players in the region, including Israel and the Arab countries, with which we enjoy traditional relations of friendship and trust. Greece is contributing to bringing stability and economic growth to the Eastern Mediterranean, in order to promote energy security and diversification of sources and suppliers for the European energy markets. A resolution of the Cyprus issue would have a tremendously positive effect, not just for the Cypriots themselves but for Greek-Turkish relations and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole.

I will conclude with a few words about the economic crisis that Greece is confronting with the help of its partners in the European Union and the international community. The new tripartite coalition Government in Greece is implementing an ambitious economic adjustment programme in order to improve its macroeconomic outlook and achieve fiscal adjustment, while at the same time addressing structural reforms aimed at growth and job creation.

That effort has produced impressive results, especially a significant reduction of the primary deficit. At the same time, the Greek economy has regained more than 50 per cent of its competitiveness in relation to its global trade partners, while the business and investment climate is on a positive path. We are determined to continue along that path, bearing in mind that the Greek people are suffering tremendously from the implementation of the austerity programme.

In a broader view, it is evident that this crisis is not just Greek or European. International economies are intertwined, and therefore ours is also a global crisis. In that respect, we need to examine measures aimed at generating all-inclusive and job-creating growth, measures that will regenerate economies and diminish the social impact of the crisis.

The eurozone, with Greece at the forefront, is making a hard and painstaking effort and adopting new

paths and ways to climb out of the deep economic crisis. The pivotal role and geopolitical importance of Greece in South-Eastern Europe, in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East will emerge as a result of the events unfolding in our neighbourhood. It is indeed a stabilizing role, since our vital national interests are aligned with the promotion of peace, stability, prosperity and regional security. Our advantage is not only our geographical position but also our strong political will to become a cornerstone of stability and security, at a time when uncertainty dangerously threatens our region.

During the past two years, Greece has been portrayed by the global media as a country defined by its economic need. It is true that our country is experiencing a painful transition leading to economic recovery and growth. It is also true that the Greek people have known in their 3,000 years of history crises more serious than the present one. We survived. We excelled. Let me assure the General Assembly and the family of nations that Greece will make it.

We will make it because Greece is larger than its geographical size and more precious than its present fiscal reality. Through knowledge, science and art, Greece is there when progress takes place. Through democracy Greece is present as a global civilization. Through Olympism Greece unites humankind. Through our merchant fleet and our maritime tradition we carry goods all around the world. Through our love for life we constantly remind the world that progress should always be measured on the human scale. Through and by our legacy we will make it once more.

We will make it because Greece is not about asking. Greece is about offering. Let us not forget that Greece holds intrinsic value in the hearts and minds of people irrespective of nationality, race and religion. And that gives us the moral power, the support and the encouragement, along with our partners in Europe, to give to the world and to win our current fight.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Yang Jiechi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that with his ability and experience he will successfully fulfil that lofty mission. I also wish to thank Mr. Al-Nasser for his positive contribution as President at the last session.

The world is undergoing major and profound changes. The trends towards multipolarity, economic globalization and the application of information technology are gaining momentum. Countries have never been as interconnected and interdependent as they are today. Emerging markets and developing countries have never had such strong influence, and cross-civilizational dialogue and exchanges are flourishing as never before. To promote peace, development and cooperation has become the shared aspiration of people across the world and the common pursuit of the international community.

On the other hand, the world is still far from being peaceful. The underlying impact of the international financial crisis and the European debt crisis remains strong. Destabilizing factors and uncertainties affecting global growth have increased. Regional turbulence persists, hotspot issues keep emerging and traditional and non-traditional security issues have become intertwined. The international security environment is highly complex.

Facing both unprecedented opportunities and challenges, we must not allow the outdated Cold War mentality and zero-sum game theory to stand in our way. We should act like passengers who stick together in a boat when crossing a torrential river and seek win-win progress through cooperation. That is the only option for countries around the world. To ensure one's own security, a country should respect and accommodate the security of other nations. To achieve one's own development, a country should actively promote common development. In pursuing one's own interests, a country should take into account the interests of other nations. Only by promoting common security and development for all its members can the international community effectively address complex and multiple security threats and global challenges, resolve increasingly serious difficulties facing development and ensure durable peace and sustainable development in the world. With that in mind, China believes that it is important to do the following.

We should promote equality and democracy in international relations. Mutual respect and equality are basic norms governing international relations. All countries, large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community.

Respect for each other's sovereignty, core interests and choice of social system and development path is a fundamental principle guiding State-to-State relations. We should resolutely promote greater democracy in international relations. A country should deal with its internal affairs itself. Issues involving the interests of various countries should be handled by those countries through consultation. We should remain true to multilateralism and uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs.

China strives to strengthen political mutual trust and to address problems and differences with other countries through dialogue and exchanges. China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose its will on others. China does not allow outside forces to interfere in its internal affairs.

We should seek win-win progress through cooperation on development. As economic globalization deepens, all countries have a high stake in each other's success. We should therefore enhance cooperation and develop common interests to achieve win-win progress with benefits for all. We should tap the potential for cooperation in all countries, increase and develop cooperation, improve cooperation mechanisms and work together to make economic globalization balanced, inclusive and beneficial to all.

We should accelerate the development of developing countries and narrow the North-South gap. We should enhance global development cooperation to ensure that the benefits of development reach everyone. Since the start of the international financial crisis, while maintaining its own robust growth, China has significantly increased contributions to international financial institutions, extended a helping hand to other developing countries and bought more bonds from certain developed countries. That has helped to stabilize the international economic and financial situation and to maintain the economic and social development of the relevant countries.

We should ensure fairness and effectiveness in conducting global governance. Facing increasing global challenges, the international community should strengthen coordination and cooperation, establish a fair, equitable, flexible and effective system of global governance, properly address the various global issues and promote the common well-being of humanity. China supports the United Nations in enhancing its authority, efficiency and ability to address new threats and challenges through the required proper reform.

It is important to advance the building of a global system of economic governance with a focus on reforming the international financial system, rapidly implement the quota and governance reform plans of the International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions, and increase the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries. We should fully implement the outcome and consensus of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), further develop international cooperation on sustainable development and discuss the establishment of a post-2015 international development agenda based on actively implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

We should launch a process of open, transparent and democratic intergovernmental consultation, with development and poverty reduction as the core objectives. We should also fully leverage the role of civil society and the private sector in that task. Together with all other parties, China is ready to actively participate in reforming the international system and in global governance and to jointly face the various global challenges.

We should pursue common progress by embracing the diversity of civilizations. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the world will be a great place when all things thrive without harming each another and when various efforts are pursued in parallel without their clashing. We should encourage exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations and social systems, draw on each other's strength through competition and comparison and make progress by seeking common ground, while maintaining our differences. We should respect the diversity of the world and the right of all countries to independently choose their development path. China encourages dialogue and exchanges among civilizations. We should replace confrontation with dialogue and bridge differences with inclusiveness in order to make the world more harmonious and to ensure common progress for humanity.

We should seek common security amid growing interdependence. No country is immune to the complex and multiple security threats and challenges in the world. We should foster a new thinking on security that is characterized by mutual trust and benefit, equality

and coordination. We should adopt a holistic approach to address both the symptoms and the root causes of the various security challenges and should build a peaceful and stable international and regional security environment.

The United Nations should fully play its role in maintaining international peace and security and in establishing a fair and effective mechanism for common security. We must resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation and oppose the wilful use or threat of force. We must oppose all forms of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

West Asia and North Africa are undergoing profound changes. China respects and supports efforts by countries in those regions to independently deal with their internal affairs. We respect the aspirations and calls of people in those areas for change and development. The unique features of those regions in terms of religion, civilization, history and ethnicity must be respected. We hope that the relevant parties will settle differences through inclusive and constructive political dialogue and that they will resolve problems peacefully.

Safeguarding peace and stability in those areas, upholding the fundamental and long-term interests of Arab countries and ensuring the growth of friendly China-Arab relations will remain a central goal of China's policy towards such regions. We will continue to tirelessly strive, together with countries in those areas, to promote peace and development in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

China is deeply concerned about the stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and the economic and humanitarian difficulties facing the Palestinian people. The turbulence in the region should not divert international attention from the Palestinian issue. China supports the Palestinian people in establishing, on the basis of the 1967 border, an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China supports Palestine's membership of the United Nations and other international organizations. China urges both Palestine and Israel to take concrete measures to remove obstacles and to work for the early resumption and substantive progress of the peace talks.

China is deeply concerned about the ongoing tension and worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. We call on all relevant parties in Syria to put an immediate end to the fighting and violence, to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point plan and the communiqué of the foreign ministers' meeting of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), and to launch an inclusive political dialogue and a Syrian-led political transition as soon as possible. China is open to any political plan that is acceptable to all parties in Syria. The relevant parties of the international community should play a positive and constructive role in that regard, credibly support Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, in conducting impartial mediation, and strive to set in motion and move forward the process of political transition in Syria.

The Iranian nuclear issue has reached a new, critical stage. The relevant parties should remain committed to a diplomatic solution and begin a new round of dialogue as soon as possible. In the spirit of respecting each other's concerns, we should act with flexibility and pragmatism to expand common ground and overcome differences, seek early progress in dialogue and negotiation and, over time, achieve a comprehensive, long-term and appropriate solution to the issue. China has always supported efforts to uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and will continue to work with the parties concerned and play a constructive role in seeking a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation.

The Asia-Pacific region has maintained general stability and rapid growth for many years, thereby making important contributions to global stability and prosperity. Given the growing threat of shrinkage in the global economy and increasing volatility in the international situation, maintaining peace, stability and sound growth in the Asia-Pacific region is crucial to ensuring the well-being of its people and meets the broader interests of the international community.

We should fully respect the reality of a diverse and interdependent Asia-Pacific region, and continue to follow the approach of regional cooperation — building consensus, making incremental progress and accommodating each other's comfort levels — that has proved effective over the years. We should promote regional development with greater determination, advance regional cooperation with increased resources, and handle differences with longer-term interests in mind so as to uphold the peace, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.

As an important participant in building the international system, China is committed to sharing development opportunities with other countries and to working with them to overcome various challenges and realize security and development for all. China will stay the course of peaceful development. We seek a peaceful international environment in which China can promote its own development. By so doing, China will contribute to global peace and development. China is firm in upholding its core interests. At the same time, it respects the legitimate right of other countries to protect their interests. We seek to expand common interests with other parties for the sake of the common good.

China has contributed a total of some 21,000 personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions and taken an active part in international cooperation on counter-terrorism, anti-piracy and non-proliferation efforts. In our efforts to resolve major international and regional hotspot issues, we have urged the parties concerned to seek peaceful solutions through negotiation and thereby played an important and constructive role in easing tensions and achieving the political resolution of those issues. China has made remarkable progress in pursuing peaceful development and will continue to follow that path in the years to come.

China will enhance friendly relations and cooperation with all other countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence and strive to promote a new type of relationship among major countries based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation. Following a policy of building good relationships and partnerships with neighbouring countries, China has actively expanded exchanges with its neighbours.

China has contributed to over 50 per cent of Asia's growth for many consecutive years. We have endeavoured to build mechanisms of mutual trust and political cooperation with other Asian countries and appropriately to address differences and frictions among relevant countries. On the basis of firmly upholding China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, we have worked with our neighbours to maintain sound relations and overall stability in the region. China treats other developing countries as good friends and good partners; we therefore support each other and seek common development on the basis of equality.

By the end of 2011, the Chinese Government had built over 2,200 projects that are important to the local economies and people's lives in the countries concerned. We have cancelled the debts owed to China by 50 heavily indebted poor and least-developed countries. We have trained over 60,000 personnel in various sectors for 173 developing countries and 13 regional and international organizations. All of that has contributed to the economic and social development of other developing countries.

China has taken an active part in reforming the international system and global governance, and assumed its due share of international responsibilities and obligations as its capabilities permit. We are working to build a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory global trading system and a more equal and balanced new global partnership for development. We support a greater role for the Group of Twenty as the premier forum for international economic cooperation, as well as the efforts of emerging markets represented by the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — aimed at exploring a new model of global cooperation.

The global economy is at a critical stage, and achieving full recovery and sustained growth will be a long and difficult task. Last year, despite a challenging economic environment both at home and abroad, China registered a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 9.3 per cent, and made good progress in adjusting its economic structure and improving people's lives. Since the beginning of the year, in order to address some new problems in economic performance, the Chinese Government has stepped up anticipatory fine-tuning of the economy and introduced a series of targeted policy measures. That has boosted market confidence and ensured steady growth.

China's GDP grew by 7.8 per cent in the first half of the year, and the country has enjoyed sound economic and social development. China is still in an important period of strategic opportunities for development. Industrialization, urbanization, the application of information technology and agricultural modernization will continue to unlock our great potential for development. We have the confidence, means and ability to maintain steady and robust growth and achieve long-term, sound and sustainable development.

During its twelfth five-year plan for the period 2011-2015, China's domestic market will become one of the largest in the world. Its total imports are expected to exceed $10 trillion, and direct outbound investment

is expected to exceed $500 billion. That will create enormous business and job opportunities for the world and provide good opportunities for other countries' development.

The Diaoyu Islands have been an integral part of China's territory since ancient times. China has indisputable historical and legal evidence in that regard. Japan seized the islands in 1895 at the end of the Sino-Japanese War and forced the Chinese Government of the time to sign an unequal treaty to cede the islands and other Chinese territories to Japan. After the Second World War, the Diaoyu Islands and other Chinese territories occupied by Japan were returned to China in accordance with the Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Agreement and other international documents.

By taking such unilateral actions as the so-called island purchase, the Japanese Government has grossly violated China's sovereignty. This is an outright denial of the outcomes of the victorious anti-fascist World War and poses a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The moves made by Japan are totally illegal and invalid. They can in no way change the historical fact that Japan stole the Diaoyu Islands from China and that China has territorial sovereignty over them. The Chinese Government is firm in upholding China's territorial sovereignty. China strongly urges Japan to immediately stop all activities violating China's territorial sovereignty, take concrete action to correct its mistakes and return to the path of resolving the dispute through negotiation.

The Communist Party of China will soon hold its eighteenth National Congress. We are confident that the important meeting will lead China's reform, opening-up and modernization drive to a new stage. The facts have shown and will continue to prove that China's development is peaceful, open, cooperative and win-win in nature. We will work with the international community to follow the trend of history and the call of the times and build a harmonious world of enduring peace and shared prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Eide (Norway): Leadership is about making choices. It is about the ability to make the right decision at the right moment and to have the stamina to deliver accordingly. It is about the will to help shape the future of individuals, nations and the planet. And it is about the courage that comes with seeking peace with one's enemies, as Yitzhak Rabin once told us. Leadership is also about creating the conditions for people to choose how to live their lives. Freedom is more than the mere absence of physical or legal obstacles.

The very purpose of the United Nations is to promote freedom for all people — freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom to live in dignity. People are only truly free when they are able to choose the way they want to live their own lives, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. It is the freedom of a woman to choose when to have children and also when not to have them. It is about her freedom from intrusion of her physical integrity, as well as her right to think and say what she wants. It is about the freedom that allows mother and child to survive birth, and the freedom that allows every child to live a healthy life, receive education and walk to school without fear of land mines or cluster munitions. It is about the freedom of every man and every woman to organize, to speak out and to have their say as society progresses.

Those freedoms lay the ground for development and prosperity. They give men and women a chance to build a better future for themselves and for their families. Some people can only dream about those freedoms, but when they do exist they are often the result of collective action by families, communities, regions and States and at the global level. At the end of the day, that is why we are here in this Assembly.

In Syria, mass atrocities are continuing. The crisis in Syria started with a call for freedom and dignity through peaceful protests. The Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility. The privileges of the few should no longer stand in the way of the aspirations of the many. The regime of Bashar Al-Assad has lost all legitimacy and must cede power. The violence in Syria must stop.

Even in war, there are rules. All parties have clear responsibilities under international humanitarian law. To any party that commits violations of these principles, I say this: "You are all individually responsible. When justice prevails, you will be held accountable for the crimes you have committed. Do not expect to be pardoned by stating that your opponent committed the same crime."

When the United Nations was formed in San Francisco in 1945, we collectively decided to establish

a Security Council to act on our behalf. The permanent members were then entrusted with the right of veto. My country's delegation at the time was led by Mr. Trygve Lie, who would later become the Organization's first Secretary-General. On behalf of my country, he cast his vote in favour of the right of veto for the five permanent members, as did many other small and medium-sized countries. They did so not only to reflect the world order of the day, but also to ensure that the Council would have genuine authority to make decisions and be able to act on our behalf. They did not do so because they held certain States to be superior to others.

Therefore, and in the light of the Syrian drama, my message to the members of the Security Council is that people in the Arab world, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the Americas are watching with horror how history is repeating itself. Once again, the permanent members of the Security Council are divided and unable to protect people on the ground. In its absence, extremists on all sides are free to kill, maim and rape. We now expect the members of the Council to act. We expect them to put away outdated ideas of zero-sum games or spheres of influence and to strive to seek a common position. Enough blood has been shed.

The verdict is harsh against those who choose the wrong side of history. They must not allow narrow self-interest to block the winds of change that the vast majority of members of this Assembly applaud. President Al-Assad of Syria was not forced to take the path of conflict and confrontation; he could have opted for compromise and cooperation. Elsewhere in the world, quite different choices are being made.

Today in this Assembly, we have heard how Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein is opening the door for a free and democratic Myanmar. I commend the courage shown by the Myanmar Government. I also commend the courage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She has chosen to talk to the very people who once held her in confinement.

Earlier today in Addis Ababa, the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan made the choice to end the bloody conflict that has marred their peoples' lives for decades. The Sudan and South Sudan had again been on the brink of war, but by signing today's agreements they have opted for peace. We salute the African Union, which has, in close partnership with the Security Council, helped make that choice possible.

In Colombia, the Government and representatives of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia have made the wise choice of entering into formal negotiations in order to end another age-old conflict.

As Norway's Foreign Minister, I am the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians. We met on the eve of this session of the General Assembly. I want to take this opportunity to share with Member States my deep concern about the state of play in the Israel-Palestine relationship. Exactly one year ago, we agreed here in New York that the Palestinian State-building process had reached a level where the institutions of State were in place. Great expectations were created, only to be frustrated.

Time is running short — shorter than many seem to understand. There is significant fatigue among the Palestinian population. They may become inspired to look for alternative options — options that would severely hamper the prospects of Palestinians and Israelis alike. I see a similar fatigue emerging among the countries that are funding the Palestinian authorities.

The two-State solution is the only path to sustainable peace, but the prospect of realizing a Palestinian State based on the two-State solution is diminishing as the expansion of Israeli settlements continues. Those actions remain the main obstacle to peace and they must stop. To get the peace process back on track, we need to break the impasse and reinstall the trust in a political horizon based on the final status issues. Negotiations remain the key to achieve that; they must start now.

Leadership is also about trust. To achieve our goals, we need a strong United Nations. I applaud the Secretary-General's tireless efforts aimed at reforming the internal workings of the Organization. We have elected a Secretary-General to lead, but we must allow him to do so. Intergovernmental micromanagement of what would be the chief executive's prerogative in any modern organization is nothing but the opposite of making the United Nations work.

To conclude, leaders have real choices. Leaders have real responsibilities. Humankind shapes its own future. Failing to solve the most critical challenges of our time not only harms those who suffer under poverty, war or oppression; it also deprives people of the conviction that they too can shape their own future. And that very conviction, that belief in oneself and each other, is what will make freedom from want, freedom

from fear and the freedom to live in dignity possible for all. That is the purpose of our leadership.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that he will successfully manage the session thanks to his competence and his rich and long experience in diplomacy in the service of his friendly country, the Republic of Serbia. I also express our great appreciation for the President of the Assembly at its last session, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the fraternal State of Qatar, and thank him for the vital role he played, the constructive issues he advanced and his excellent management of the work of the sixty-sixth session. We are proud of him as a seasoned diplomat from a State member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Let me also express our great appreciation for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and thank him for the strenuous efforts he has made to enhance the effective role of the Organization in various fields. We look forward to a renewed role for the United Nations compatible with the Secretary-General's new vision so that the Organization will be able to address the major challenges before it.

Since joining the United Nations, the Kingdom of Bahrain has worked tirelessly to promote the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations, in particular, the maintenance of peace and security and the development of cooperation and friendly relations among nations on the basis of mutual respect. Guided by full respect for those principles, I am honoured to represent a country that acts upon its international commitments and has laid the foundations of a modern State through initiatives, planning and political and organizational vision. We seek to build a modern society that is well organized and committed to its values in various fields, notably education, health, employment, vocational training, economic reform and the advancement of women.

Our country, Bahrain, has opted for dialogue as an approach to all its modernization efforts aimed at meeting the requirements of its long history. We conducted municipal elections in the 1920s and parliamentary elections in the past few decades. Important results have been achieved in providing a greater degree of equality, participation, transparency, political rights and human dignity. That is truly a historical milestone on the path towards building a society based on competitive sustainability, justice, the rule of law, equality and the consecration of the principles of popular participation and representation in the decision-making process.

Notwithstanding all those remarkable national achievements, since last year the Kingdom of Bahrain has faced some serious challenges to its security and stability, which it has addressed in full transparency, commitment and honesty. In that context, we established the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry to ascertain the truth and provide redress. Consequently, we launched a comprehensive dialogue among the various sectors of society that resulted in a series of constitutional and legislative reforms encompassing all aspects of life — political, economic, social and legal.

Against that backdrop, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain proposed the creation of an Arab court of human rights to lay the foundations of an environment conducive to the protection of human rights and the prevention of their abuse in the Arab world, using the model of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Council of the League of Arab States endorsed that historical initiative, and arrangements are currently under way to establish the legal basis for the court's establishment. We hope that the court will become a reality in the near future.

Last week, consistent with our efforts to build a pluralistic Bahraini society and in full respect for the protection and enhancement of human rights, the Kingdom of Bahrain approved more than 90 per cent of the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council in Geneva during its Universal Periodic Review, including a possible accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The challenges and threats facing our region have led the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to realize the need for greater synergies among them. They have endorsed the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz

Al-Saud, to move from cooperation to union as a means of addressing those challenges and threats and building capacities to achieve a Gulf Cooperation Council society based on a shared vision of the future that responds to the accelerating pace of the world and answers to the aspirations of the peoples of the Gulf region. They are convinced that their interests and gains can be served only through solidarity and unity with a view to preserving national independence and State sovereignty and to meeting the needs arising from the strategic transformations on the regional and international scenes.

My country believes that the United Nations has an indispensable role to play in addressing international and regional problems and finding appropriate solutions to them. Our region dearly needs that role to be fulfilled, given the catastrophic and fast-paced developments taking place in Syria. The international community, represented by the United Nations and its organs and bodies entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, is called upon to unify its position with a view to putting an end to the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and finding a political solution to the crisis that will end the violence and bloodshed, preserve the unity of Syria and the cohesion of its people, and spare the region as a whole serious repercussions that could spill far beyond the borders of Syria.

The United Nations must therefore shoulder its responsibilities to protect unarmed civilians without allowing the Organization's procedures and mechanisms to impede its ability to prevent crimes against humanity from being committed. It must set aside narrow geopolitical interests and proceed to attain the supreme goal of protecting civilians in armed conflicts and wars. My Government welcomes the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and wishes him every success in his endeavours to achieve the legitimate demands of the brotherly Syrian people.

On the basis of the same humanitarian principle, we should also stand by the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar in their ordeal and provide them with assistance and support while providing good counsel to the Government of Myanmar in that regard.

Although the Syrian crisis is preoccupying the international community today, the Palestinian question remains the core issue for the Arab States and the international community. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that it is imperative to redouble efforts towards a just, durable and comprehensive solution, notably through the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the international Quartet. We are extremely concerned at attempts to violate the sanctity of the holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the attempts to alter their identity.

We call on the international community to support Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, who is striving relentlessly to defend the cause of his occupied country and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. We therefore urge the international community to demand that Israel cease its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories and dismantle settlements that jeopardize the chances for peace. We also stress the need to implement the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions by putting an end to ongoing Israeli violations and aggression, and to ensure the principles of international legitimacy, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which prohibits any geographical or demographic alteration in occupied territories. We look forward to peace in our region, which would serve the interests of all its peoples.

One tenet of our foreign policy is to enhance peace and security in the region. In that regard, Bahrain reaffirms its unflinching position in favour of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That will be possible only by compelling Israel to implement relevant international resolutions, to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to subject its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Moreover, we stress that the Islamic Republic of Iran must fulfil its commitments in full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA. Indeed, nuclear weapons constitute a serious threat to peace and security in the entire region, and various parties must therefore assume their responsibility for peace and security and refrain from the language of intimidation, threats and counter-threats that have recently dominated our region.

In that regard, we stress the importance of an excellent preparation process for the 2012 conference to be held pursuant to the agreement reached in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation

of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)). We also reaffirm that the principle of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in no way precludes the right of all nations to access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, provided that they do so in full transparency and abide by the IAEA guarantee system.

While the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have extended their hand to their neighbour, the Islamic Republic of Iran, they have unfortunately found no positive Iranian response that could facilitate confidence-building, peace and security. On the contrary, we have had to endure constant interference in our internal affairs from our neighbour. Recently, Iran has reiterated menacing threats to GCC Member States, in contradiction of the spirit of good-neighbourliness, thus generating tension and distrust in the region. More importantly, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need, either through direct negotiations or through arbitration by the International Court of Justice, to resolve the problem of the three United Arab Emirates' islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb that are occupied by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

With regard to the situation in brotherly Yemen, we are aware of the need for a successful transitional period in order to achieve security and stability in the country, in line with the agreement reached within the framework of the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanisms. We welcome the steps taken by Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, to launch a national Yemeni dialogue, and we are fully confident of his wise leadership of Yemen during this critical transitional period, so that the aspirations of the Yemeni people can be realized.

In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the convening of the donors conference for Yemen, held in Riyadh and sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and fully supports the recommendations and conclusions agreed upon with a view to building a brighter future for brotherly Yemen, as well as the outcome of the meeting of the Friends of Yemen, held today in New York.

We also reaffirm the unwavering, principled and consistent position of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in solidarity with the Kingdom of Morocco, regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of Morocco and the peaceful settlement of the Moroccan Sahara issue pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions.

In regard to the current political developments in Somalia, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the election of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new President of the Somali Republic in the context of the transitional process. We call on the international community to offer its support and assistance in the restoration of peace and security in the country and in the preservation of Somalia's territorial integrity and political independence. We commend the efforts of the Somali Government, together with the international community, to restore peace, stability and cooperation, particularly in combating piracy in the Horn of Africa.

We have recently witnessed ugly insults and denigration addressed to our beloved Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him, his family and his companions. A typical example of that is the shameful video that the Kingdom of Bahrain condemns in the strongest terms, and which led to violence and destruction around the world. Our concern is compounded by the unjustified aggression perpetrated against the diplomatic mission of the United States of America in Benghazi that killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens and a number of innocent American diplomats, in flagrant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.

In spite of these serious developments and repercussions, we should not let that gloomy scene overshadow the spectacle of the crowds that took to the streets in Libya the following day to condemn that abominable attack on the American mission. We are all responsible, as peoples and nations, to teach each other about respect. We need to redouble our efforts to prevent the recurrence of insults to religions, prophets and other religious symbols as Allah commands us in the Holy Koran:

> "We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of A'lah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing and acquainted" (*The Holy Koran, XLIX:13*).

The Kingdom of Bahrain is among the first to have achieved most of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) before the prescribed time frame in the fields of education, the empowerment of women, the expansion of social security to vulnerable groups, equal

opportunities for men and women, and the enhancement of health services, notably for children. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bahrain occupies an advanced position at the global level, as reflected in the United Nations Human Development Reports issued during the past few years.

If the international community is to overcome the challenges facing Member States, we must be able to fully shoulder their responsibilities, especially as the deadline for achieving the MDGs is approaching. We are only three and a half years from that deadline. We have to redouble our efforts and review our policies in order to enhance national and regional capacities to avoid imbalances and to overcome challenges. According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*, and notwithstanding some negative indicators, child mortality has been decreasing across the world, the percentage of those living in extreme poverty has been halved, and over 89 per cent of the world's population now has access to safe drinking water.

However, it seems that other objectives are still unattainable in many countries, and inequalities continue to rise in some areas such as public health that remains dismal and a cause for great concern. That also applies to the scarcity of water resources. We therefore cannot use the global financial crisis as an excuse for reneging on our financial commitments to those countries in greatest need.

In that regard, Bahrain welcomes the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as the Secretary-General's vision with regard to sustainable development. Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that people across the world not only have access to the most basic needs, but that they have the tools to maintain them over time. We must acknowledge that sustainability is not merely a response to needs but rather a principal element of human dignity.

To conclude, I believe that the formidable changes and challenges our world faces today present valuable opportunities that we can exploit through wisdom, courage, patience and joint action. We must work with all our capacity to address the elements that divide us, particularly backwardness, extremism and isolationism. At the same time, we must continue to lend a hand to those most in need. We must use objectivity and honesty to challenge immobility and prejudice in order to achieve the progress, dignity and prosperity to which our peoples aspire.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Edouard Niankoye Lama, Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Guineans Living Abroad of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Lama (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): On behalf the delegation of Guinea, which I have the great honour to lead, I would like first of all to congratulate the President on his election to guide the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session at a time when our Organization is facing multiple challenges. That mark of trust placed in him is a vibrant tribute to his country, the Republic of Serbia, as well as to his recognized diplomatic qualities, which augur well for the success of our deliberations. His predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, of Qatar, deserves our gratitude and thanks for his excellent work. I should also like to express my Government's highest appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his dynamism and determination in the exercise of his mandate.

The theme of this session, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", lies at the very heart of the uncertainty that weighs on the future of humanity. The emergence of new forms of violence at the hands of numerous actors and non-State groups, international terrorism, and above all the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all constitute grounds for concern. While inter-State conflicts have decreased in recent years, intra-State conflicts in certain regions of the world have led to political instability, general insecurity and human tragedies, with their attendant economic, social and environmental crises.

It follows that the peaceful settlement of disputes, as a fundamental principle of international relations, is becoming more indispensable than ever for the maintenance of international peace and security. That principle requires sustainable preventive strategies and concerted efforts on the part of regional and subregional organizations along with international development partners. The critical need for States to promote and defend the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law is the bulwark par excellence against attempts against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

International mediation as a means of prevention or a way to end violence through dialogue, along with negotiation and the achievement of final agreements, should be given pride of place. In that context, the Guinean delegation encourages the rapid deployment of mediators and experts. It also wishes to offer its emphatic support to the Secretary-General's initiative encouraging the role of women in the mediation process.

In developing States, especially in Africa, mediation and settlement mechanisms should be strengthened through capacity-building and the allocation of sufficient resources to assure a holistic and effective approach. The institutionalization at the national, regional and international levels of a culture of peace that includes dialogue between civilizations and religious tolerance is the irreversible path towards a world of solidarity and peace.

In West Africa, where the northern part of our neighbour, Mali, has been occupied for months by terrorist and rebel groups, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the restoration of territorial integrity constitute the primary challenges of note. Guinea reiterates its support for the initiatives of the Economic Community of Western African States and the African Union in their search for a solution to that crisis, whose effects on the countries of the subregion could well be devastating. In that regard, Guinea joins the Government of Mali in urgently demanding the Security Council to deploy an international contingent to restore the territorial integrity of that brother country.

In Guinea-Bissau, the consolidation of peace and stability requires the restoration of all democratic institutions. With respect to the Great Lakes countries, we support the efforts of the international community and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, which seek to restore peace and security in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is fundamental for the stability of that country and the region.

In the Horn of Africa, there has been encouraging progress with respect to the peace process in Somalia. The implementation of a new federal Parliament, the adoption of a new interim Constitution and the election on 10 September of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of the Republic, all demonstrate the commitment of the Somali people, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the United Nations to support peace, democracy and reconciliation in that country. The Government of Guinea would like, at this time, to express its warmest congratulations to the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia.

Guinea also supports the ongoing negotiations between the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan regarding post-independence issues, in accordance with the African Union road map of 24 April 2011, as approved by the Security Council in its resolution 2046 (2012). We welcome the agreement reached by the parties on sharing petroleum revenue.

In the Middle East, the restoration of lasting peace in the region must of necessity depend on the creation of an independent Palestinian State, living in peace and security side by side with the State of Israel. The situation in Syria increasingly cries out to the international community. We urge the concerned parties to spare no efforts to halt the violence, protect the population and restore peace. My Government reaffirms its support for the declaration on Syria of the recent extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The adoption on 21 June of the outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) offered the international community an opportunity to renew its political commitment to sustainable development in all its dimensions — economic, social and environmental. The priority of the international community today should be the effective implementation of the commitments made to take into account the legitimate concerns of all countries, in particular in Africa. To that end, Guinea remains convinced that defining a post-2015 development agenda must take into account the complementarity of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the sustainable development goals resulting from Rio+20 in order to ensure maximum benefit from the subsequent synergy.

In consideration of Africa's post-2015 development agenda, at the proposal of my country, the fifth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in Addis Ababa in March, and the seventeenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, held in New York in May, agreed to promote South-South and triangular cooalition.

South-South and triangular cooperation is now becoming a new modality for international cooperation in order to deal with the debt and financial market crises and the lack of traditional official development assistance and implement international development goals, such as the MDGs and the Istanbul Programme of Action, among others. From this rostrum, I would like to launch an urgent appeal to all Member States and development partners to support that innovative initiative of solidarity by the international community towards Africa. The continent remains the weakest link in the international development mechanism despite its vast potential and its economic performance in recent years.

Since the election in 2010 of President Alpha Condé to the highest office, the Government has undertaken an vast programme of democratization and political, institutional, economic and social reforms. At the political level, a law on the fair reconstitution of the Independent National Electoral Commission, adopted by the National Transition Council, was approved by the President. We hope that that will open the way for the holding of legislative elections by the end of the year.

I would like to reiterate the Government's commitment to continuing to promote human rights and to ensure public freedoms. To meet the various challenges facing the country following the 2010 presidential election, the Government has submitted to the Peacebuilding Commission a request for support and assistance in three priority areas, namely, national reconciliation and unity, security sector reform and youth and women's employment.

Those priorities resulted in a statement of mutual commitment, adopted here in New York on 23 September 2011 in the presence of our Head of State. A year later, the implementation of those mutual commitments has produced encouraging results thanks to the significant efforts of the Government, the United Nations and other partners. I would especially like to welcome the significant progress in security sector reform, in particular the biometric census of troops and the retirement of nearly 4,000 soldiers.

In order to build on those achievements, we believe that Guinea and its partners should benefit from the momentum and trust created by those initial steps to continue the reform by extending it to all components of the security sector, in particular the police and the judiciary. We are convinced that strengthening the security and stability of the country and of the subregion depend on that.

In the economic and social field, there has been significant progress in combating the macroeconomic imbalances and in improving prospects for growth and people's living conditions.

Those policies enabled Guinea to reach the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative a few days ago, following meetings of the Executive Boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The subsequent foreign debt relief will make it possible to release significant financial resources to investment in basic social services to alleviate poverty. The normalization of relations with creditors, restoring the State's credibility, will promote access to new foreign financial resources. However, the Government of Guinea is aware that reaching the completion point is only a first step and that many challenges must be overcome to launch the country on the path of sustainable growth. Our objective is to rapidly raise the country to the ranks of an emerging economy through the exploitation of its natural resources.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Guinea's firm support for efforts to reform the General Assembly and the Security Council so as to strengthen the effectiveness and democratic governance of our universal Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rafael Roncagliolo Orbegoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Roncagliolo Orbegoso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of President Ollanta Humala Tasso and the Government and people of Peru, I wish to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to lead this session, during which we are very honoured to support him as one of the Vice-Presidents. I would also like to congratulate him on his initiative to make the pacific settlement of disputes the central topic of our debate. The pacific settlement of disputes is the fundamental way to eradicate the scourge of war, which, in turn, is the main objective of the Organization and its Charter. The commitment not to resort to the threat or use of force is the cornerstone of international peace and security.

Peru reaffirms its ongoing and resolute commitment to the principles that inspired the birth of the United

Nations: multilateralism, the pursuit of international peace and security, solidarity and cooperation. In that context, Peru solemnly affirms its continuing commitment to the pacific settlement of disputes.

In that task, the International Court of Justice, as the main judicial organ of the United Nations system, plays a fundamental and, fortunately, increasing role, in particular in Latin America. Peru reaffirms its full respect for the work of the Court and calls on States to turn to it to resolve their differences and to respect and comply with its decisions, pursuant to Chapter XIV of the United Nations Charter.

The 123 disputes that had been submitted to the Court as at December 2011 are proof of the fact that the international community is actively committed to the pacific settlement of disputes, to diplomacy and not to war. Recourse to the Court, far from being an unfriendly act, is an eloquent testimony to our desire for peace.

We reiterate our faith in multilateralism and deplore the existence of situations to which, to date, our Organization has not been able to find solutions. The latest and most painful one of these, due to the high toll it is taking in human lives, is the crisis in Syria. Peru condemns the use of force and violence in that country, and calls once again on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities and to initiate a genuine process of dialogue and peacemaking, in the framework of respect for the independence and sovereignty of that country and for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

We support the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and the Arab League to find a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict. We would encourage the mission of the Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, to continue its efforts.

However, that is not the only outstanding issue. Peru deems regrettable the fact that in more than 60 years our Organization has not been able to find a solution to the legitimate demand of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State and to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. Peru recognizes the Palestinian State, has established diplomatic relations with it and, based on Peru's historical position since 1947 and on international law, supports its admission as a full Member of the United Nations, without detriment to Israel's right to its own security.

Peru also condemns once again the unfair, illegitimate and illegal economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed against Cuba, to which the Organization has been unable to put an end despite the countless condemnations from the Assembly.

We also regret that it has not yet been possible to find a solution to the nearly 200-year-old dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding the Malvinas Islands. We call upon the parties once again to initiate a dialogue leading to a negotiated solution.

To overcome these and other shortcomings and deficiencies of the current international order, it is urgent to adopt measures within our own Organization, the most urgent one probably being a reform of the Security Council aimed at making it a more efficient, transparent, democratic and representative forum. The United Nations must reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and update the current architecture, which remains best suited to the post-war world of 1945. The current scenario requires that developing countries take greater responsibility for preserving peace and security. We deplore the limited progress made in negotiations on this issue. We consider that the time is ripe to relaunch the reform process, and we call upon Member States to spare no effort in bringing this process to a speedy conclusion.

As a concrete sign of Peru's contribution to strengthening the rule of law, it was my pleasure to deposit yesterday the instruments of ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as the amendments to the Montreal Protocol regarding ozone-depleting substances. We call on all countries to accede to these instruments, which are aimed at protecting the environment, ensuring respect for human rights and fighting against all forms of impunity. It is a moral duty to ensure that the perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity are duly tried and punished.

The rule of law also requires more inclusive societies. Civil, political and social citizenship must encompass everyone equally. Accordingly, Peru has incorporated into its national legislation the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization. Since Peru is the first country to adopt these measures, its indigenous peoples will be able to fully exercise their rights and ensure that all investors

have obtained the requisite social licence, within the framework of State powers.

In spite of all of those efforts, new and diverse threats to the rule of law have emerged. Transnational organized crime, funded mainly by drug trafficking, today constitutes the main threat to democratic societies. The magnitude of this problem requires, more than ever before, combined efforts with an integrated vision of shared responsibility at the global level.

It is for that reason that this past June Peru hosted the International Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Specialized National Agencies against the World Drug Problem, in an attempt to resume a political dialogue that had been interrupted for nearly 20 years. That valuable opportunity proved to us that amid our diversity there are many more convergences than discrepancies, and that the will exists to intensify cooperation in this area.

We are confident that this first step will be further complemented by new initiatives that will guarantee greater exchange of information, a better allocation of resources, and better results in reducing the supply and demand of narcotic drugs as well as in the field of alternative development, a topic that will be addressed next November at an international conference to be hosted by Peru.

That Peruvian initiative on the fight against drugs is not the only reflection of our commitment to multilateralism and integration. Since June, Peru has held the presidency pro tempore of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). We want to see democracy consolidated throughout South America. Many lives have been lost during the long journey towards consolidating democracy in our region. For that reason, we will not be deterred by any circumstance that may threaten that undertaking.

In our capacity as President Pro Tempore of UNASUR, we reiterate that democracy will remain an essential requirement for integration and cooperation in South America. We also hope that South America will become a zone of peace, without exclusions. It is already a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and we will work tirelessly so that it can soon be a zone free of anti-personnel mines. The money currently spent on arms must be redirected towards development and overcoming poverty and inequality.

Peru is peace-loving country and a staunch defender of disarmament. At the international level, we are party to the main disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. Furthermore, Peru hosts the headquarters of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. We promote confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries, especially measures aimed at conventional disarmament to favour the development of our peoples. In that context, we cannot but welcome with enthusiasm and high expectations the efforts made by the Government of President Santos Calderón of Colombia to open the path of dialogue in order to end long years of violence, as justly claimed by the people of Colombia. Peru expresses its best wishes for the success of that initiative.

From the South American perspective, we also aspire to build bridges with all the regions of the world. In such a spirit, Peru will in a few days welcome heads of State and Government of South American and Arab countries to the third Summit of South American and Arab Countries. The Summit has become an important instrument in bringing the two regions closer together and, through it, its member countries have opened a channel for dialogue and political understanding at the highest level. That will afford us the opportunity to develop common interests in areas such as trade, investment and culture, all for the benefit of our peoples.

Thanks to appropriate macroeconomic policies, Peru has continued to grow, reaching a growth rate in 2011 of 6.92 per cent and a 5.7 per cent average rate over the past 10 years. Despite those good results, wide sectors of the population do not fully participate in the benefits of economic growth. Hence, it is time to ensure growth with social inclusion, as President Ollanta Humala Tasso has pointed out since the beginning of his Administration. The new vision that Peru promotes is oriented towards further economic growth and democratic stability as it expands and maximizes social well-being and harmonizes productive activities with environmental preservation. In Peru's view, starting with the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda must achieve a convergence of the processes of the Millennium Development Goals with the processes of the sustainable development goals.

Peru's commitment to the United Nations is long-standing and deep. Allow me to conclude by honouring here to three prominent Peruvian diplomats who have held the highest responsibilities within the Organization — Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuellar,

Secretary-General from 1982 to 1991; Ambassador Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, President of the General Assembly at its fourteenth session, from 1959 to 1960; and Ambassador José Luis Bustamante y Rivero, President of the International Court of Justice from 1967 to 1969. The recognition and responsibilities that those individuals received from the international community show that Peru has always been committed to peace and to the observance of international law. I am pleased to see the Permanent Representative of Peru presiding over the debate this evening.

As a co-founder of some of the main regional forums, such as the Andean Community, the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Peru has always been a standard-bearer for integration and for positive, respectful relations with all countries of the world and, in particular, with the countries of our region and neighbouring countries. As a basis of that policy, Peru has always trusted — and will continue to place its trust — in the strength and primacy of international law and in the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is with that conviction that the Government of President Ollanta Humala Tasso reiterates its staunch adherence to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today, in the Assembly, the Prime Minister of the notorious Israeli regime made a series of entirely baseless allegations against my country. At this late hour, I do not wish to take the precious time of my colleagues to reply to such unfounded statements, which I will not dignify with an answer other than to categorically reject them, in particular regarding the nuclear programme of my country, which is exclusively peaceful and in full conformity with our international obligations and undertaken in exercise of our inalienable right to use nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes.

I also do not wish to take the valuable time of my colleagues to explain the very well-known history and record of my country — a country that has no record of aggression in its centuries-long history; a country that is party to all major international instruments banning the production and use of weapons of mass destruction, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, and that is fully committed to all its relevant legal obligations under such treaties; a country that is proud of having proposed the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and that continues to strongly support its realization; and a country that has never been involved in terrorist activities but has lost more than 17,000 of its citizens, including nuclear scientists, to martyrdom at the hands of foreign-backed terrorists; a country that has been the main victim of the modern use of chemical weapons in nearly 600 attacks, which resulted in the injury or martyrdom of more than 100,000 Iranian citizens, including more than 7,000 injuries among civilians stemming from nearly 30 attacks on Iranian cities and villages.

Likewise, I do not wish to refer to the totally dark record of the Israeli regime in ruthlessly killing innocent women and children and committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity over more than six decades. The 33-day war against Lebanon and the 22-day barbaric attack on Gaza, together with its inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip, are only a few recent examples of such atrocities.

Nor do I wish to describe the dark history of terrorist activities committed by the current regime, whose roots are in terrorism, and which is the founding father of State terrorism as used in the recent history of war.

What I would like to bring to the Assembly's attention is only a very small part of the dark history of this regime, namely, its record of non-compliance with the international instrument regulating weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its related obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law. Not only is the Israeli regime the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East, but, despite repeated calls from the international community, it has never intended to become party to it. The worst of it is that in a statement on 11 December 2006, the then Prime Minister of the Israeli regime admitted its position on nuclear weapons, which, as has been repeatedly stated by the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, "poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of their neighbours and other States".

Taking into account these realities, and the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2012/50 (Vol.I)), adopted by consensus, 189 States party to the NPT, including the United States and other significant supporters of the Zionist regime, unanimously appealed to that regime, by name, to accede to the NPT without conditions, and to put all its clandestine nuclear activities under international safeguards.

Now the Prime Minister of the regime has shamelessly and hypocritically raised an outcry, and, by his baseless and absurd allegations about my country's exclusively peaceful nuclear programmes, tried to abuse the tribune of the General Assembly to distract Member States' attention from the danger of its nuclear arsenals, clandestine nuclear programme and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, which are the only source of threats to peace, security and stability in the Middle East and beyond. Instead of making baseless allegations against other countries in the region, this regime must obey the repeated demands of the international community and accede promptly and without conditions to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon party, as well as to place all its nuclear-related facilities under the comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency verification system.

The international community should also continue to exert all possible pressure on this regime, particularly during the upcoming 2012 NPT-related Conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in order to force it to abide by international demands. Similarly, this regime, which is also not a party to WMD-related treaties other than the NPT, and which, by developing weapons of mass destruction, tries to solve its inherent legitimacy problems, must be compelled to comply fully with all its international obligations.

While the use or threat of use of force on any pretext is a grave violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as the norms of international relations, the officials of the Israeli regime, who, rude as they are, threaten countries in the region, particularly my country, with military attack on a daily basis, Iran has the strength to defend itself, and reserves its full right to retaliate with full force against any attack. At the same time, the international community should live up to its responsibilities and exert pressure on this regime to end all this irresponsible behaviour in a volatile region such as the Middle East.

Finally, for the second time in the recent history of the United Nations, today, in the General Assembly, an unfounded and imaginary graph was used to justify a threat against a founding Member of the Organization. It is worth mentioning, however, in our increasingly interconnected world, and in the information age, it is hardly possible for nations to be fooled by such absurd devices. It is evident that no amount of slanderous deception or smear campaigning by the Zionist regime can obscure its dark history or divert attention from the reality.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the People's Republic of China on the issue of the Senkaku Islands.

In his address in the general debate (A/67/PV.9), Mr. Noda, the Prime Minister of Japan, stressed that various international issues should be solved by reason rather than force. He has also repeatedly pointed out the importance of the rule of law, which is one of the foundations of global peace, stability and prosperity, and that any attempt to achieve a country's ideological aims or claims by the unilateral use of force or the threat of force is inconsistent with the fundamental spirit of the United Nations Charter.

The Cabinet of the Government of Japan made a decision in January 1895 to formally incorporate the Senkaku Islands into the territory of Japan, while the island of Formosa and the islands appertaining or belong to it were ceded to Japan in accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed in April 1895. It is therefore clear at the outset that the assertion that Japan took the islands from China cannot logically stand. In any case, Japan had been conducting thorough surveys of the Senkaku Islands since 1885. These surveys confirmed that the Senkaku Islands were not only uninhabited but showed no trace of having been under China's control. Based on that information, Japan formally incorporated the Senkaku Islands into its territory.

Japan renounced territorial sovereignty over the island of Formosa — Taiwan — and the Pescadores, ceded by China after the Sino-Japanese war, in accordance with article 2 (b) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. It was made clear, however, that the Senkaku Islands were not included with Formosa and the Pescadores, by the fact that the United States

of America actually exercised administrative rights over the Senkaku Islands, as part of the Nansei Shoto southwest islands, in accordance with article 3 of the Peace Treaty, and the islands were explicitly included in the areas whose administrative rights reverted to Japan in 1972.

It was only in the 1970s that the Government of China and the Taiwanese authorities began making their own assertions of territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, which are part of Japan's inherent territory. Until then they had never expressed any objections to Japan, nor did they protest the fact that the islands were included in the area over which the United States exercised administrative rights in accordance with article 3 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The posture of simply attributing this difference of opinion between the two countries to the past war is not just unconvincing and unproductive; it is also a way to evade the essence of the issue.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On the question of the Diaoyu islands, the Japanese representative once again brazenly distorted history and resorted to spurious, fallacious arguments that defy all reason and logic to justify their aggression of Chinese territory. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Yang Jiechi reiterated China's firm position on the Diaoyu Dao issue in the statement he made to the General Assembly. That position is consistent and clear-cut.

The Diaoyu islands and their affiliated islands have been an integral part of China's territory since ancient times, and China has indisputable historical and jurisprudential evidence to support that claim. Japan waged an expansionist war of aggression against China at the end of the nineteenth century. In the same way that other colonial countries grabbed and occupied the land of many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Japan stole Taiwan and its affiliated islands, including the Diaoyu islands, from China through that war and began its colonial rule over them.

During the Second World War, China, the United States and the United Kingdom issued the Cairo Declaration, which clearly stipulated that one of the purposes of the three countries in fighting that war was to make sure that all the territories that Japan had stolen from the Chinese would be restored to China. The Potsdam Declaration and the Japanese Instrument of Surrender issued in 1945 further confirmed that Japan, as a defeated country, would have to honour its international obligations in good faith, one of which was to return to China all the territories, including the Diaoyu islands, that Japan had stolen. However, despite the many years that have gone by, the Japanese Government still clings to its obsolete colonial mindset, breaches its international obligations time and again, and attempts to continue to occupy the Diaoyu islands.

The recent so-called island purchase by the Government is no different than money laundering. Its purpose is to legitimize its stealing and occupation of Chinese territory through illegal means and to confuse international public opinion and deceive the people of the world. Japan's action constitutes a serious encroachment upon China's sovereignty, with Japan intending to continue its occupation and legitimize the fruits of its colonial policy. It is an open denial of the outcomes of the victory of the world anti-fascist war and a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Any illegal act, no matter how it is packaged, is illegal in nature and never generates rights. That is a basic principle of international law. Japan's act falls into that category and is utterly illegal and void. It will never change the fact that the Diaoyu islands are part of China's territory, nor will it ever shake China's resolve to safeguard its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Diaoyu islands and their affiliated islands. The Government and the people of China will never waver in their will and determination to uphold China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

China is capable of safeguarding the integrity of its territory. The Chinese Government urges the Japanese side to put an immediate halt to all acts that undermine China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): There is no doubt that the Senkaku islands are an inherent territory of Japan, based on historical fact and international law. Indeed, the Senkaku islands are clearly under Japan's legitimate control. China's assertions have no grounds at all. In any case, there exists no territorial sovereignty issue to be resolved with respect to the Senkaku islands. I refrain from entering into any more detailed rebuttal of the statement made by the delegation of the People's Republic of China. The position of the Government of Japan on the issue is as stated previously.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China firmly opposes the statement made by the Japanese

representative, who not only feels no guilt for Japan's history of aggression and colonialism, but instead makes remarks that do not hold water at all. China is strongly opposed to such a position.

Japan's so-called nationalization of the Diaoyu islands is based purely on the logic of thieves. At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan stole large chunks of territory from China, including the Diaoyu islands, through a colonial war of aggression. We are now in the twenty-first century, but Japan continues to hold on to its obsolete colonial mentality in an attempt to exercise long-term occupation of islands that it stole from China. The entire 1.3 billion Chinese people have expressed strong indignation against that state of affairs and will firmly fight against such practices.

The Japanese act is a rejection of international efforts to end colonialism, an outright denial of the victorious defeat of Japan in the world anti-fascist war and a grave challenge to the post-war international order and international law. China is firmly opposed to that position. China will continue to take resolute and forceful measures to unswervingly safeguard Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty. The current situation has been caused by the Japanese side singlehandedly. Japan must respect history, face reality, discard illusions, refrain from daydreaming, honour its international obligations, take concrete measures to redress its mistakes and stop all acts that violate and undermine China's sovereignty.

The meeting rose at 11.20 p.m.